

# An Analysis and Study of College Students' Language Competence in the New Media Era



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**Abstract:** In the era of new media, people mostly communicate virtually on online platforms, which has weakened college students' oral expression ability in real-life settings. As a result, there is a considerable gap between college students' language expression competence and social demands, posing obstacles to their all-round development. Starting with an investigation of the current situation, this paper analyzes the problems concerning language expression in the new media environment and puts forward targeted countermeasures.

**Keywords:** new media, college students, language competence

## 1. Introduction

Language is a tool for expressing the inner self and one of the means through which people articulate their views and emotions to the outside world. The so-called language expression ability refers to the capacity to present one's own thoughts, opinions, and perspectives through written and spoken means, and to exchange information with others; it generally encompasses both written and oral expression abilities (Gong, 1999). Language expression ability constitutes an important component of the comprehensive quality of college Students, an essential skill for completing their academic studies and conducting scholarly research, and one of the core competencies for future career development and social interaction. Over the past five years, the slogans released by the Ministry of Education, the State Language Commission, and the Department of Language Application and Administration of the Ministry of Education for the National Putonghua Promotion Week have all emphasized the standardized use of Putonghua and Chinese character writing, the strengthening of the promotion and popularization of the national common language and script, and the contribution to foster a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation.

The rapid development of Internet technology has profoundly transformed the forms of social communication and modes of interaction. New media has reshaped college students' communicative practices, leading to a noticeable contrast: active online expression but timid face-to-face

communication (Li et al., 2024). As digital natives, "post-2000 college Students" enjoy the benefits of information diversity, immediacy, and interactive convenience, while also facing problems such as fragmented and casualized language expression. Based on the new media environment, this paper analyzes the current status and impact of college Students' language expression ability and proposes corresponding countermeasures.

## 2. The New Connotations of College Students' Language Expression Ability in the New Media Era

New media generally refers to communication and media forms that utilize digital and network technologies to deliver information and services to users through channels such as the Internet and wireless communication networks, via terminals including computers, mobile phones, and digital televisions. In the new media era, information exchange and dissemination are primarily categorized into four types: instant communication via social software, information publishing through official accounts, real-time broadcasting via live-streaming platforms, and message dissemination through online forums (Cheng, 2018). It represents the convergence of multiple forms, including text, images, audio, video, and live streaming.

The forms of language expression among college Students in the new media era have undergone significant changes compared with those in the traditional media environment. Influenced by Internet culture, college Students' linguistic habits

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and expression abilities exhibit new characteristics, with widespread phenomena such as excessive reliance on the Internet and constant attachment to mobile phones. According to the 56th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China published by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of June 2025, the number of Internet users in China reached 1.123 billion, with an Internet penetration rate of 79.7%. Among them, approximately 100 million are “post-2000 college Students,” who have become the core demographic of young Internet users.

In the new media environment, college Students’ language expression has shifted toward a comprehensive ability characterized by cross-platform integration, multi-modality, and high literacy, exhibiting distinct connotations of the era. First, the diversification of expression carriers requires proficiency in various forms such as text, images, audio-visual content, and emoticons, adaptation to fragmented reading patterns, achievement of concise and succinct expression, and flexible register switching according to different contexts. Second, expression content emphasizes logical rigor and principled stances, highlighting clear viewpoints and positions grounded in rationality and evidence, rejecting emotional venting and vulgar expression, stressing the discernment of information authenticity and rational dialogue, and demonstrating positive values of the youth. Third, adherence to normative rules in expression demands strict observance of laws, regulations, and public order and good customs, conscious resistance to improper Internet jargon, maintenance of linguistic norms and literary cultivation in online expression, and preservation of the standardization and aesthetic quality of the mother tongue.

### 3. The Current Status of College Students’ Language Expression Ability in the New Media Era

To further investigate the current status of college Students’ language expression ability in the new media era, the author conducted a questionnaire survey among enrolled students from the first to the fourth year of undergraduate study. The questionnaire comprised 32 items, organized around four dimensions: self-assessment of current language expression status, contextual application, ability perception, and improvement needs. A total of 659 valid questionnaires were collected, including 548 from Han students and 111 from ethnic minority

students. Based on the survey findings, the actual conditions of college Students’ current language expression ability can be summarized as follows:

#### 3.1 High Putonghua proficiency rate, yet low Putonghua proficiency test participation rate

In the era of new media, the fundamental requirement for language expression is proficiency in Putonghua, which serves as a prerequisite for cross-platform and cross-group communication. The survey results indicate that 76.12% of college Students are proficient in Putonghua, a finding that meets the communication demands of the new media environment and provides a foundational guarantee for students to engage in online communication, content creation, and public expression.

Simultaneously, the survey reveals several concerning issues: 46.13% of students have not participated in the Putonghua Proficiency Test (PSC); the dialect usage rate in rural areas reaches 36.43%; and the problem of limited vocabulary among infrequent Putonghua users is as high as 61.54%. These findings suggest that the Putonghua proficiency of some students remains merely at the level of “daily communication,” failing to meet standardized and normative standards, and thus falling short of the accuracy and professionalism required for language expression in the new media era. Furthermore, the low participation rate in the Putonghua Proficiency Test prevents students from accurately identifying deficiencies in their own Putonghua expression, thereby hindering their initiative to improve and enhance their proficiency.

#### 3.2 Deficient oral expression competence and low inclination for in-person communication

The era of new media has witnessed the emergence of high-frequency oral expression scenarios, including live streaming, oral narration for short videos, online audio co-hosting, and cloud-based presentations, which impose higher demands on college Students’ impromptu expression, vocabulary reserve, and emotional management capabilities. The survey reveals a dual predicament in students’ oral expression competence: first, 29.89% of students suffer from insufficient vocabulary reserve, resulting in phenomena such as “impoverished and repetitive language” in short-form video creation and online discourse, thereby failing to achieve effective communication; second, 27.22% of students exhibit significant expression anxiety, which severely constrains their expressive efficacy in real-time interactive scenarios such as live streaming and online interviews, running counter to the core

imperatives of “immediacy and interactivity” inherent to new media.

These issues are markedly amplified within the new media environment. Vocabulary deficiency leads to inadequate content appeal, while emotional barriers undermine the fluency and persuasiveness of real-time expression. More critically, the frequency of oral expression practice among college Students remains at an extremely low level—the survey indicates that merely 6.52% of students engage in oral expression six or more times per week, reflecting weak willingness to participate in offline face-to-face scenarios. This vicious cycle of “weakening competence—absence of practice—further degradation of competence,” if left unaddressed and unabated, will continue to erode the core expressive competitiveness of the youth demographic in the new media environment.

### **3.3 Deficiencies in written expression and inadequate ability to adapt to the requirements of diversified written expression for new media**

In the new media era, written expression is no longer confined to traditional academic writing and practical document composition; it also encompasses diversified, lightweight, and personalized forms such as short-form video copywriting, WeChat Official Account articles, comment section discourse, and social media copy. While these emerging formats impose higher demands on content quality, their core requirements remain substantive content, clear logic, and coherent structure. Social media’s emphasis on brevity, immediacy, and casualness erodes students’ formal writing competence and logical expression ability (Dhanani, 2025).

The survey reveals numerous deficiencies in college Students’ written expression: 42.64% of students produce writing with insubstantial content; 37.48% exhibit loose article structure; and nearly 70% demonstrate extremely low writing frequency (zero pieces per week). This high proportion of minimal writing practice directly results in students’ new media written expression remaining largely at the level of “fragmented and nutritionally deficient” content, making it difficult to produce substantive and appealing material. Furthermore, the absence of systematic written expression training leads to disorganized logical expression, rendering students incapable of articulating viewpoints with clarity and coherence, thereby impeding effective information transmission. However, contrary to the aforementioned findings, when responding to Question 24 (“Which do you consider stronger, your

written or oral expression?”), 30.05% of students self-assessed their written expression as superior to their oral expression, while 47.5% rated the two as roughly equivalent. This indicates that their perceived competence in written expression remains confined to the realm of traditional academic and practical writing, with little awareness of the substantial gap between this conception and the diversified written expression competencies required in the contemporary new media era.

### **3.4 Weak competence in situational expression and lack of language transfer ability**

In the new media era, language expression scenarios exhibit diversified and cross-domain characteristics. Scenarios such as classroom expression, job-seeking expression, online public expression, and professional content expression are increasingly intertwined, imposing requirements of “precise adaptation” on college Students’ contextual expression competence. The survey reveals a marked imbalance in students’ contextual expression capabilities. Regarding classroom expression, while 30.35% of students demonstrate strong willingness to participate, merely 17.15% self-assessed their expression efficacy as “very good,” indicating weak expressive desire in university classroom instruction. The lecture-based teaching method creates distance between instructors and students, and many students lack the capacity to articulate their viewpoints through speech and expression. Classroom expression serves as the foundation for new media scenarios such as online presentations and professional content explanation; the weakness of this foundational competence directly impacts expressive efficacy in new media contexts. In terms of job-seeking expression, although 72.23% of students report adequate preparation, 20.79% self-assessed their expression efficacy as “mediocre.” Many students struggle with incoherent expression, unclear logic, and insufficient oral fluency in academic and workplace scenarios (Carranza et al., 2024). In the new media era, online job-seeking has become mainstream, with resume copywriting and online interview expression constituting the core components of job-seeking. Despite their preparation, students’ suboptimal expression efficacy reflects their insufficient adaptability to online job-seeking as a new media expression scenario.

Overall, students’ expressive competence has yet to develop contextual transferability; they struggle to adjust their expressive style, content, and modality according to the demands of different new

media scenarios. How to transform classroom academic expression into accessible expression for short-form videos, or how to convert formal job-seeking expression into interactive expression for online co-hosting. These are challenges that require collaborative strategy development and multi-scenario simulation practice between instructors and students, ultimately enhancing expressive competence to ensure that college Students' language expression meets the "new" requirements.

### **3.5 Strong willingness for competence improvement, disconnection between ideological attention and practical actions**

The survey indicates that 95% of students consider language expression competence to be of critical importance, and 88.19% express willingness to enhance this competence. Among them, 73.9% prioritize improving oral expression ability, while 74.05% identify logical thinking training as their most pressing need. This demand aligns closely with the core competency requirements of the new media era: oral expression constitutes the primary modality of new media expression, while logical thinking serves as the foundational substrate for all new media content.

The survey further reveals that 86.64% of students acknowledge the impact of language expression competence on job-seeking outcomes and demonstrate clear awareness of their own deficiencies and improvement needs. However, their practical actions exhibit marked inertia: on the one hand, high-frequency expression practitioners are extremely scarce, with merely 6.52% of college Students engaging in oral expression six or more times per week, and a considerable proportion demonstrating low written expression frequency, failing to leverage the advantages of the new media era—namely, its abundance of expression scenarios and convenient expression channels—for daily practice; on the other hand, some students exhibit "introverted personality" traits, with 46.74% reporting participation barriers. Although new media provides introverted students with "lightweight, non-face-to-face" expression channels (such as textual commentary and copy-writing), students have failed to effectively utilize these advantages to overcome their barriers. This ultimately engenders a paradox of "cognitive emphasis yet behavioral inertia," rendering language expression competence ill-adapted to the developmental demands of the new media era.

## **4. Strategies for Improving College Students' Language Expression Competence**

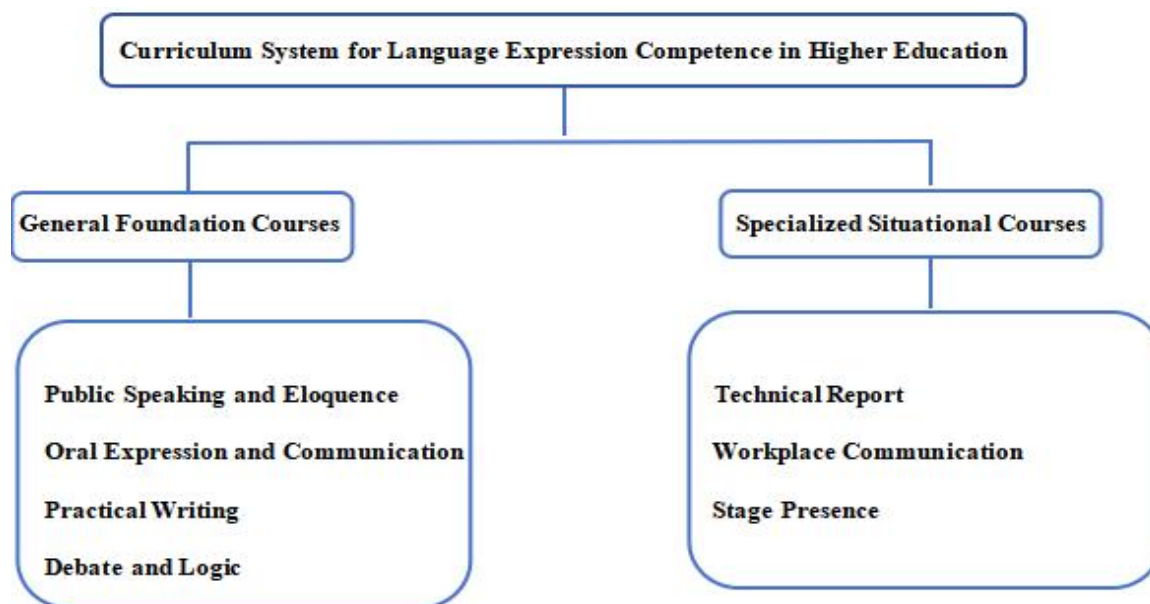
Based on the foregoing analysis, we propose the following strategies across five dimensions to comprehensively address the deficiencies in language expression competence and facilitate the cultivation of college Students into versatile talents adaptable to the developmental imperatives of the new media era.

### **4.1 Promotion of Putonghua proficiency test**

In the new media era, the reinforcement of linguistic standardization assumes particular significance. On the one hand, institutions of higher education should integrate the Putonghua Proficiency Test and language expression competence certification into their talent cultivation systems, establishing explicit proficiency requirements for non-language-major students, and regularly organizing specialized training sessions and mock examinations to enhance test coverage rates. On the other hand, standardized language education should be strengthened through general education curricula and thematic lectures, disseminating knowledge of Putonghua articulation techniques, linguistic logical norms, and etiquette expression conventions, thereby rectifying such issues as dialectal habits, logical disorganization, and improper diction in oral expression, and rendering normative expression a fundamental competency among college Students. Concurrently, students should be guided to cultivate the awareness that "language expression constitutes core competitiveness," correcting the one-sided perception of "prioritizing professional skills while neglecting linguistic literacy," and fostering cognitive emphasis on competence enhancement from the ideological dimension, thereby laying a robust conceptual foundation for subsequent practical training.

### **4.2 Optimizing the curriculum system and establishing hierarchical and classified teaching modes**

Currently, institutions of higher education offer general education courses such as College Chinese, Putonghua, Modern Chinese, Logic, Applied Writing, and Graduation Thesis Writing. The efficacy of these curricular offerings in addressing students' language expression competence enhancement remains limited. To remedy the existing deficiencies in students' weak oral expression and lagging written expression, we propose the construction of a targeted and practical university language expression competence curriculum system with courses as its vehicle. As illustrated in Figure 1:



In actual teaching, the “theoretical indoctrination” model is abandoned in favor of interactive methods such as case-based teaching, scenario simulation, and group seminars. To address students’ anxiety in face-to-face verbal expression, the curriculum incorporates group presentations, classroom debates, and impromptu speeches, progressively alleviating students’ fear of public speaking. Regarding written expression, the training is intensified within the context of new media, encompassing diverse genres including short video scripts, We-chat public account articles, workplace documents, and academic papers, thereby cultivating students’ multifaceted written communication competencies adapted to the new media era. This approach ensures that course instruction genuinely aligns with practical demands. Integrating short-video creation into language courses can effectively enhance students’ oral expression and audience awareness(Wang & Liu, 2025).

#### 4.3 Constructing practice platforms for immersive expression training

To address the problems of low willingness to express and insufficient practical engagement among college Students, it is essential to adopt practice as the core strategy and establish comprehensive, normalized training platforms. Immersive scenario-based training effectively improves students’ ability to adjust expression styles across contexts (Li et al., 2024). First, classroom practice bases should be developed by implementing a “classroom participation credit system” and normalizing “group presentations,” thereby encouraging students to “speak up.” Expressive training time can be reserved

in each class session, facilitating students’ transition from passive listening to active expression and progressively overcoming psychological barriers to face-to-face communication. Second, campus practice carriers should be expanded through the establishment of diverse club platforms encompassing calligraphy, music, basketball, psychology, and other domains, alongside the organization of activities such as speech contests, debate competitions, host competitions, and copy-writing contests, as well as reading clubs, sharing sessions, mock interviews, and mock negotiations. Through these large-scale, wide-ranging collective activities, students can cultivate oral expression and improvisational response abilities in authentic scenarios. Third, new media practice scenarios should be integrated by guiding students to operate campus self-media accounts, participate in short video production, and engage in live streaming, thereby combining written expression with new media dissemination and developing competencies in graphic layout, concise language use, and interactive communication. This approach helps bridge the gap between online activeness and offline reticence, aligning students’ expressive capabilities with the demands of new media. Through immersive, high-frequency practical training, students can transform from being “afraid to speak and unable to write” to “speaking proactively and writing proficiently,” ultimately achieving the integration of cognitive commitment and practical action.

#### 4.4 Enhancing transferable language competence across diverse contexts

Building all-round and regular practice platforms integrates classroom, campus, and new media scenarios (Zhang et al., 2026). The core expressive scenarios for college Students encompass four categories: academic scenarios (classroom participation, academic defense, thesis presentation), workplace scenarios (interview communication, work reporting, team collaboration), social scenarios (daily interaction, public speaking, etiquette communication), and new media scenarios (short video broadcasting, copywriting interaction, live streaming expression). Targeted training is conducted accordingly. Through university laboratory simulations of authentic scenarios, deconstruction of expressive techniques, and debriefing of training outcomes, students are guided to summarize the expressive patterns across different scenarios, learn to flexibly adjust linguistic styles, expressive logic, and communication approaches, and achieve the transferable application of “one competence, multiple adaptations,” thereby resolving the dilemma of “being capable of only one mode of expression and unable to respond to varied contexts.”

#### **4.5 Cultivating sustainable habits to establish long-term mechanisms for autonomous improvement**

Universities and instructors need to guide students in developing habits of autonomous learning and sustained practice, thereby constructing long-term mechanisms for self-improvement. Structured training in graphic design, language conciseness, and interactive communication enhances new media expression competence (Dhanani, 2025). First, students should be assisted in formulating personalized improvement plans, encouraged to identify their own weaknesses and clarify training objectives, and supervised to ensure action implementation through check-ins, debriefing, and self-assessment. Second, digital tools should be leveraged to facilitate improvement, utilizing resources such as speech learning system applications, Changyan Putonghua APP, and other online courses for autonomous practice in Putonghua, public speaking, and writing, enabling students to utilize fragmented time for practice and accumulation, thereby enhancing expressive competencies. Third, students should be encouraged to actively participate in social practice, volunteer services, and part-time internships, exercising their language expression abilities in authentic social contexts and transforming competence development from a “campus task” into an “autonomous need.” Concurrently, instructors

should strengthen follow-up guidance, provide regular feedback on students’ training outcomes, address problems in the improvement process in a targeted manner, and help students overcome inertia during practice, thereby cultivating persistent exercise habits.

#### **5. Conclusion**

For college Students, new media has not only become an important channel for acquiring knowledge and information but has also permeated every aspect of daily learning and life, including online course learning, social media interaction, and digital entertainment (Dong et al., 2023). This deep integration has exerted profound influences on college Students’ language competence, encompassing both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, new media provides students with abundant linguistic materials, expressive forms, and corpus resources; the widespread application of new media platforms has broken the temporal and spatial constraints of traditional communication, creating richer communicative scenarios for college Students. On the negative side, information dissemination in the new media environment exhibits distinct characteristics of fragmentation; excessive reliance on internet language may also weaken students’ ability to learn and master traditional linguistic norms, making it difficult for them to accurately employ complex syntactic structures and lexical collocations in written expression (Yue et al., 2021); students who overly depend on online communication tools often exhibit nervousness and lack of confidence in face-to-face verbal communication, and may even develop language expression disorders (Wang, 2020).

Although the current state of college Students’ language competence is not optimistic, it is encouraging to note that 95% of students consider language competence to be of critical importance, and 88.19% express willingness to improve. This constitutes the tremendous motivation and hope for advancing our efforts. Universities should increase resource investment, equip professional language instructors, and construct dedicated facilities such as lecture halls, simulated studios, and writing workshops to provide hardware support for training. Concurrently, language competence should be incorporated into the comprehensive quality evaluation system for students, linked with merit-based awards and credit recognition, thereby stimulating students’ motivation for improvement.

Instructors should transform their pedagogical philosophy, strengthen the awareness of “all-staff education,” and integrate expression training into classroom teaching across all disciplines, allowing language competence to permeate the entire learning process.

### Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflicts of interest to this work.

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