

Importance and Problems of Oral Teaching in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the importance of oral teaching in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The oral teaching of the primary stage of Chinese as a foreign language has different characteristics and properties from other languages and other stages of learning in terms of the nature of the subject and the stage of learning. The main goal of oral teaching is to improve students' oral communication skills. The training of second language teaching skills is generally divided into listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation. The purpose of language teaching is to cultivate students' ability to communicate in the language they have learned. This study introduces the problems that should be paid attention to in the primary stage of oral teaching, which is helpful in teaching oral Chinese as a foreign language. Teaching Chinese as a foreign language should take the cultivation of learners' language communication skills as the main goal, which has become a consensus among people. Among the many courses of Chinese as a foreign language, oral course can be regarded as the most flexible and directly related to the actual communicative ability of the training language. Speaking class provides students with speaking opportunities, such that students can master spoken words, spoken grammar and spoken expression patterns; fully mobilise the language information accumulated in the brain memory bank for communication; and move up from language learning as soon as possible. The 'plateau area' in China is a problem that teachers of oral English classes need to explore. This study aims to improve the effect of oral Chinese teaching in the primary stage of teaching as a foreign language and achieve the expected teaching goals. This study also discusses this issue from the principles of specific teaching implementation.

Keywords: oral English teaching; oral Chinese proficiency; oral teacher; teaching Chinese as a foreign language; teaching effect

INTRODUCTION

With the expansion of China's opening to the outside world and the increasing number of student exchanges, an increasing number of foreign students come to China to learn Chinese, and many colleges and universities have undertaken the task of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The key link in teaching Chinese as a foreign language is the teaching of oral Chinese. Moreover, to further improve the oral Chinese level of foreign students and ensure the quality of teaching oral Chinese as a foreign language are an urgent problem to be solved. Learning a foreign language well is equivalent to opening a window to the outside world. It will bring convenience to life and work at home and abroad and help improve communication with people from different cultural backgrounds (Huang, 2005).

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is divided into many contents, and the common prescient principle is a profound revelation of the rules of spoken Chinese as a foreign language. Generally, language teaching has two major topics, one is what to teach, and the other is how to teach. The former is the foundation, whereas the latter is the guarantee. Teaching content often directly determines teaching methods, which was explained by Alexander in the middle and early stages. Therefore, to discuss teaching methods, teachers must initially clarify the characteristics of the teaching content (Fu, 2007). In teaching oral Chinese as a foreign language, our teaching content depends to a large extent on the actual needs of students. Teachers teach what students want to learn. Obviously, foreign students come to China to learn Chinese.

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language allows students to know their progress, achievements and the effectiveness of applying knowledge in practice. Teaching Chinese as a foreign language can arouse the desire to learn better. At the same time, through feedback, shortcomings and mistakes can be seen in time and be corrected directly, which will inspire self-motivation. Many experiments have proven that understanding the results of one's own learning can play a stimulating effect. To make use of what is learned, it should be used immediately, generate a sense of accomplishment in the application and stimulate the desire to learn further. Therefore, teachers need to teach some of the most commonly used and useful language words in life (Chen, 2016).

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is not performed according to the actual needs of the students. At present, a wide variety of materials are available for teaching Chinese as a foreign language, with different qualities, focuses, pertinence and applicability. However, many teachers, either in accordance with regulations or according to inertia, use a textbook and a different schedule to perform oral teaching. Teaching Chinese as a foreign language completely ignores students' own conditions, learning goals and hobbies. Even the content of the teaching materials used by some teachers is seriously ageing, and no vivid language has full of the characteristics of the times at all. Thus, oral teaching based on such teaching materials of Chinese as a foreign language receive the teaching effect it should have, which is a waste of teachers' labour and students' learning.

The prescient principle commonly used in teaching Chinese as a foreign language is precisely the application and development of this principle in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. As far as teaching content is concerned, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language focuses on determining the order of language teaching from static semantics, whereas the commonly used prescient principle focuses more on the actual use of language. Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is to determine the teaching sequence from the perspective of pragmatics or plan the teaching according to the dynamic requirements of semantics. Therefore, teaching oral Chinese as a foreign language is more instructive.

PURPOSE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHING ORAL CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The purpose of teaching oral Chinese as a foreign language is to cultivate the ability of foreign students to use Chinese in oral communication in real life. Spoken language teaching occupies a highly important position in the entire teaching system of Chinese as a foreign language, and it is also a bridge for foreign students from textbook knowledge to practical application. A researcher once conducted an informal questionnaire survey among 100 foreign students. About 95% of the students said that 'Chinese conversation' is the skill they most hope to possess (Liu, 2012). Oral proficiency represents the Chinese proficiency of foreign students to a certain extent; thus, it should be highly valued in teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

The purpose of oral English teaching is that students can speak correct sentences and engage in daily communication. Therefore, in addition to phonetic and vocabulary learning, students must also be able to use the phonetic, vocabulary and grammar knowledge they have learned to communicate. To achieve this goal, in the initial stage of oral Chinese learning, it must be achieved through a large number of single sentence drills and situational conversations. After the teacher briefly explains the grammatical points, he should immediately give appropriate words and situations to allow students to use the structure they have learned to practice repeatedly, find problems and correct mistakes in the practice and finally achieve the goal of students correctly mastering the language skills.

Before many foreign students came to China, the pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary of Chinese were unknown to them. Every teacher engaged in teaching Chinese as a foreign

language must get the students to speak the first sentence of Chinese and make them get started as soon as possible, which could be challenging. The target of oral Chinese teaching at the author's school is mostly foreign middle and senior managers. These students have certain advantages in language learning, such as clear learning goals, strong learning motivation, strong self-control and emotional stability. However, these students are generally older, and language learning has certain limitations for them. Their mother tongue is already quite mature, which can easily cause a negative transfer of language learning. At the same time, foreign students have strong self-esteem and have greater psychological barriers to 'speaking' in class. Most students like to read books rather than speaking (Qiu, 2010). This problem is common and prominent in the teaching of spoken Chinese to foreign students.

FACTORS RESTRICTING THE IMPROVEMENT OF FOREIGN STUDENTS' ORAL CHINESE PROFICIENCY

Through investigation and analysis, the factors restricting the improvement of foreign students' oral Chinese proficiency are generally divided into two aspects: the internal factors of the students and the external environmental factors.

INTERNAL FACTORS OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

In Chinese learning, the learning motivation, attitude, interest and emotional state of foreign students often affect their oral Chinese proficiency. Of course, this process is not passive but presents a state of active feedback to information.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

In the questionnaire survey, a striking phenomenon was found that although most foreign students are aware of the importance of learning oral Chinese, only 33% of the students said that they 'will actively speak in oral Chinese classes'. They said that they were worried about making mistakes and being laughed at when they are learning Chinese conversation as they are in an unfamiliar country and environment, they have not yet mastered a single Chinese character and they will inevitably have considerable psychological pressure. Many students dare not speak because they are afraid of speaking poorly. This situation is quite common, and the oral Chinese proficiency of most foreign students has not improved significantly for a long time.

THINKING FACTOR

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is a second language teaching. When foreign students learn a second language, they already have a whole set of thinking systems in their mother tongue, which will inevitably be affected by their mother tongue. Foreign students at the zero-start stage are often at the stage most manipulated by their mother tongue. The survey found that the Chinese spoken by most foreign students is quite characteristic of their native language (Chen, 2011).

DIVERSITY OF LEARNING PURPOSES AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, foreign students come from different countries, and their cultural background, knowledge level, ideological status, hobbies, living habits, experience, position and age are extremely different. These factors will directly influence the teaching effect. In the primary stage of oral teaching, teachers should pay special attention to teaching students in accordance with their aptitude. On the basis of teacher demonstration and student imitation, the teacher should remind students of the different pronunciation methods

and the pronunciation of their mother's tongue and Chinese pronunciation in response to the mistakes that students from different countries are prone to make. Teachers can use oral and tongue maps, gestures and other means to show to students.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES OF FOREIGN STUDENTS' TEACHING AND LIVING

SINGLE TEACHING METHOD

It is mainly manifested in the emphasis on teacher-centred teaching. Foreign students are often in a passive state, lacking initiative and enthusiasm. Teachers do not pay attention to adopting targeted and adaptive teaching methods according to the needs of their students.

LAYOUT OF TEACHING MATERIALS

Over the years, some publishing houses or educational institutions have launched many teaching materials for teaching Chinese as a foreign language, but 'localised' teaching materials that actually adapt to the learning habits of foreign students are few. The currently published paper-based textbooks generally only reflect a single teaching model and teaching method theory, using the same style from beginning to end. The practice form is stylised, and the content is mostly vocabulary and syntactic structure exercises. Moreover, communicative and task-based exercises are lacking and not closely connected with real life.

CONVERSATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

A good conversational environment is an important condition for improving the level of spoken Chinese. In the course of teaching, in addition to using Chinese in getting out of class, English, French and other languages are found in every corner of the classroom after learning; especially in the dormitory, many foreign students generally use their mother tongue when resting and chatting.

COUNTERMEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ORAL LEVEL OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO STUDENTS TO ELIMINATE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS OF FOREIGN STUDENTS AND MOBILISE THE ENTHUSIASM OF LEARNING SPOKEN CHINESE

When teachers of Chinese as a foreign language try to alleviate or eliminate the emotional barriers of students, they must first pay attention to improving their own quality, love the cause of teaching Chinese as a foreign language and strengthen communication with foreign students. Moreover, teachers need to pay attention to improving their teaching methods. The classroom is mainly based on students and guides them to be in a proactive position. Every lesson should be as rewarding as possible for students of different levels. They should avoid correcting mistakes when students practice, especially at the introductory stage. The word order, grammar and vocabulary of students have a strong native language; thus, teachers must pay attention to protecting students' self-esteem and enhancing their self-confidence.

ACTIVELY RESEARCH SCIENTIFIC AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODS

The degree of understanding and the depth of analysis of foreign students are the key to good oral Chinese teaching and organising classroom teaching in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. In teaching, the ability to achieve teacher-student interaction and classroom activity is a measure of the classroom effectiveness of every teacher of Chinese as a foreign language. Especially for foreign students who are starting from scratch, how to attract their attention as soon as the class starts and make them interested in the content taught should be the first issue that teachers consider in oral Chinese as a foreign language.

INTUITIVE TEACHING METHOD

It refers to the method of explaining the meaning of words through intuitive means, such as objects, pictures, actions, gestures and expressions. This method can directly establish a connection between words and objects, which is beneficial for international students to think directly in Chinese. Object teaching can arouse students' interest in learning. If teachers combine sentence patterns while speaking, then students will improve faster. The students in the primary stage of Chinese learning have less language knowledge and poor language ability, which brings a certain degree of difficulty to the teaching of teachers. Conversely, understanding vocabulary and grammar in Chinese is bound to be difficult for students. Teachers must make full use of various teaching methods to show students vividly and intuitively. For example, in the study of speech, the teacher can put a piece of paper in front of his mouth and demonstrate the difference between aspirated and unaspirated sounds by the movement of the paper during pronunciation. In some vocabulary learning, teachers can use photos, cards and real objects to show them to students, such that students can see them at a glance. In the study of grammar, teachers can introduce memory sentences through situational methods. This type of intuitive teaching allows students to learn something useful, which not only increases their interest but also increases their vocabulary (Qin, 2011).

EXPANDED TEACHING METHOD

It refers to the selection of words with strong expansion ability, strong ability to use and high frequency of use in vocabulary teaching and the selection of characteristic words that can reflect the characteristics of Chinese culture and words with oral colour. The focus of the introductory stage of Chinese is vocabulary teaching. Vocabulary is the building material of language. To master a language, especially a second language, vocabulary learning is highly important. Firstly, teachers should pay attention to the classification of vocabulary, focusing on those words with strong expansion ability, strong utilisation ability and high frequency of use. In teaching, teachers should try to expand the vocabulary as much as possible. For example, they should analyse the morphemes in the 'shop' and expand the 'shop' for 'restaurants,' 'flower shops', 'hotels' and 'bookstores'. Secondly, consciously cultivating students' verbal skills in terms of word distinction or verb collocation is necessary, such as the difference between '跑步' and '散步', '首都' and '首府' and '大厅' and '走廊' ('running' and 'walking', 'capital' and 'capital' and 'hall' and 'corridor'; Han, 2011).

PERSONALISED TEACHING METHOD

Personalisation is to let students jump out of the text, use the language knowledge learned in the text to talk about what they are familiar with and tell their own stories. Some topics can be formulated in conjunction with the text in class, such as 'self-introduction', 'my family', 'my room' and other communication topics suitable for the introductory stage of Chinese to stimulate students to tell their own affairs.

APPROPRIATE MEMORY TEACHING METHOD

Memory teaching is to store Chinese vocabulary by reciting a certain number of sentences and short essays and to be familiar with basic Chinese grammar. Foreign students at the introductory stage have a relatively small vocabulary, which often affects their oral expression. Therefore, teachers must pay attention to guiding students to change the dialogue style of the text to a narrative style, combining key sentences and keywords, appropriately reciting and strengthening retelling.

MULTIMEDIA TEACHING METHOD

The use of multimedia is highly important in second language teaching. Teachers can use multimedia to provide students with rich visual and auditory stimulation. They may use pictures or an animation to make students understand challenging topics.

CONTEXT PRACTICE METHOD

The language environment includes the small classroom environment and the social environment, which are complementary to each other. The language environment, that is, the classroom teaching, extracurricular activities and social language environment of the three communication levels, should be fully utilised to improve learning efficiency (Chen, 2003).

In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers should continue to stimulate students' perception of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar through a large number of mechanical exercises to enhance students' understanding and cognition of these language knowledge. This point is specific to the classroom arrangement. Teachers should play the role of an organiser and a planner in the classroom, the role of the overall leader and overall layout of the teaching activities in the classroom and the implementer and embodiment of the teaching activities. Students and teachers should maximise the initiative of students and design different forms of exercises and activities, such that students can make full use of the words, structures and expressions learned in the text. Moreover, students need to control the use of language through a large number of mechanical exercises. The operation of attention also becomes an automatic application.

CONCLUSION

As long as what they really need in daily communication is taught in this period, the teaching of oral Chinese as a foreign language can achieve the expected results as the foreign students are at the introductory stage of Chinese where they urgently need to master oral Chinese communicative competence. In the introductory stage of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, the main focus should be on phonetic teaching, vocabulary teaching and sentence structure teaching. Sentence structure exercises can help students master the structure of the Chinese language and transform language knowledge into language skills. When imparting language knowledge and training language skills, only by organically combining with the cultural factors of the language can the language communicative competence of foreign students be truly improved and the purpose of teaching be effectively achieved (Ling & Xianshun, 2021).

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