

Exploration on Game Teaching Strategy for Children's Chinese Learning in Southeast Asia

Ling Qin
Xi'an University
Xi'an, China 710065

Abstract—In recent years, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language develops vigorously, presenting a trend of large amount of people, large scale and younger age. Chinese course is opened in more and more kindergartens in various countries in Southeast Asia, which forms a new challenge to Chinese teaching. Teaching by game is suitable for the mental characteristics of children, and it can create a joyful and relaxed learning environment in the classroom, stimulating Children's enthusiasm to learn to the largest extent, making learning easier and teaching more efficient. The game teaching strategy is discussed in this paper from the principles and precautions to carry out children's Chinese teaching in Southeast Asia areas starting from the definition of game and the psychological mechanism of children.

Keywords—*Southeast Asia; children; Chinese teaching; game*

I. INTRODUCTION

In order to conform to the development trend of the world and to promote the economic and trade contact and cultural exchanges with China, various countries in Southeast Asia have adjusted their policies on language and softened restrictions on Chinese language to different extent, enabling Chinese teaching to walk out of the low ebb and develop towards the open, legal and normalized direction. As a result, the "Chinese fever" emerges in those countries one after another in an unprecedented way. So far, 6 countries in Southeast Asia have included Chinese language teaching into the national education system, thus Chinese language becomes an important international language favored by people all over the world.

In recent years, it can be seen from the overseas Chinese teaching that one of the important characteristics of promoting Chinese language worldwide is that a younger-age trend presents in the Chinese language education. A new learning group, the preschool children aged 3-6, appears before the Chinese language educators. The research on Chinese teaching for children starts to draw attention from the cycle of Chinese teaching.

II. POSITIONING OF CHILDREN'S CHINESE TEACHING

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language for children is an important component of Chinese promotion in the world. To teach Chinese as a second language, we should consider not only the language teaching characteristics, but also the age,

demand and psychological characteristics of the learners. The special age and physical and mental development characteristics of infant Chinese learners are different from other learners, and the teaching organization and management in class have their own features. The positioning of children's Chinese teaching objective has a direct influence on the selection of teaching content, adoption of teaching method and evaluation of the effect. The formulation of teaching content conforming to the characteristics of learners aged 3-6 can help them to keep interest and enthusiasm in learning, and to obtain Chinese knowledge and culture in a practical and effective way. Therefore, accurate positioning of teaching objective, and grasping the objective system of children's Chinese education seems to be particularly important.

III. GAME TEACHING METHOD

A. Definition of Game Teaching Method

Zeng Jian points out in the Application of Game in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching that, in a broad sense, game refers to all the language activities in second language or foreign language class arranged in an organized way; in a narrow sense, it refers to the interesting, diversified and flexible language activities inserted in class teaching in order to arouse students' activity and consolidate the language knowledge they have gained.

Game teaching method aims to turn the uninteresting language learning into an interesting one by performing teaching activities in coordination with suitable games, and creating varied and fascinating communicative circumstances. Game is a teaching method enabling children to learn in joyful game activities, so this method is accepted by children with pleasure.

B. Game Teaching Is the Selection Conforming to Children's Psychological Mechanism Characteristics

The psychological research shows that, it is a critical period for children aged 3-6 to learn language, because they have a strong imitation ability of language and high enthusiasm to learn it at this stage. Of course, children at this stage still have the characteristics such as weak abstract thinking and dominated by thinking in images, short intentional attention, easy to have non-intentional attention, obscure and instinct motivation and demand for learning, and

lack of will guarantee. It seems especially important to make class teaching fascinating and arouse children's intention to learn Chinese, as interest will enhance students' internal motivation of learning second language.

C. Necessity of Game Teaching Method

As for the mentality of children of younger age, it is their nature of being playful. Most of the people in Southeast Asia have religious belief with inner peace, advocating conducting an activity in accordance with its natural tendency. They favor the principle of "recreation first" in terms of education of their children. Children's daily life is dominated by games and amusements, and priority is also given to interest of children in terms of their learning, which is short of patience and persistence. Therefore, game teaching method conforms to characteristics of children in this area, such as loving to move and play, full of curiosity in new things, and is one of an effective teaching method for children's Chinese learning, meeting their unique physical and mental development features.

IV. CURRENT SITUATION OF CHILDREN'S CHINESE TEACHING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A. Condition of Children's Chinese Teaching Promotion in Southeast Asia

Currently, as for the Chinese teaching in Southeast Asia, the situation that children of Chinese origin function as the main part is change subtly. More and more children not of Chinese origin start to accept Chinese education and study the Chinese course. As of 2018, China has established 20 Confucius Classrooms in Southeast Asia. The social atmosphere of learning Chinese language and Chinese culture is created by this platform. Carrying out Chinese teaching and cultural promotion in local places has provided more convenient conditions of Chinese learning for learners of younger age in the world.

B. Current Situation of Children's Chinese Teaching in Countries in Southeast Asia

In recent years, relevant institutions and schools for Chinese teaching are established relying on governmental and non-governmental strength of countries in Southeast Asia, which has promoted Chinese teaching reform and development further. Nevertheless, problems still exist in these countries, such as lack of funds for running school, poor necessary teaching conditions, and great insufficiency of teachers. With the annually increased preschool learners, teacher's work load is bound to increase. Teachers are busy with teaching every day, having no time and energy to study and discuss Chinese teaching methods; moreover, the supply-demand gap has also lowered threshold for Chinese teachers. As a result, the professional quality of Chinese teachers cannot be guaranteed, leading to shortage of attraction and vividness of Chinese courses, making the Chinese teaching atmosphere depressing. All of the above shortcomings have influenced and restricted the improvement of children's Chinese level to certain extent.

V. PRINCIPLES FOR CARRYING OUT CHILDREN'S CHINESE TEACHING WITH GAMES

The starting point of game teaching method is to make entertainment a medium of education, giving priority to the cultivation of students' interest in learning. But the ultimate goal of games is still the realization of teaching objective. Examining from time, form and quantity, game should be limited to an appropriate degree, so as to give play to the value of game in teaching in true sense, and complete the teaching task more efficiently. Be sure to keep in mind that the essence of teaching should not be neglected by pursuing recreation.

A. Dominated by Interest

The Confucius says that "one who knows is not as good as likes to know, and likes to know is not as good as happy to know", emphasizing that interest plays a role of promotion in learning. Zhu Zhixian points out in his Great Dictionary of Psychology that, interest is "the psychological tendency of pursuing knowledge, exploring a certain thing, generated by emotional experience satisfaction researched by acquired teaching method, and it relates to demand." It can be seen that interest is a kind of recognition tendency and the best motivation for learning. As a result, the design concept of game should satisfy students' emotional experience, with the stimulation and cultivation of students' interest in learning as the dominance. Students can learn with enthusiasm if they have interest in learning, and teachers can lead students to learn with joy if they make teaching funny. Children will have an increased passion for learning Chinese if they realize the pleasure, and keep such motivation for learning Chinese.

B. Scenario Setting

John Dewey, an American education expert, advocates connecting the activities in daily life to the knowledge acquired in school with emphasis on "learning in practicing". There should be an actual experience situation in teaching to function as the initiative stage of thinking. In his opinion, children are born with strong interest in activities, and they can learn by their own only in the interesting activities of real meaning, and develop intelligence in practice. In the game, teacher should provide a situation relating to life experience to the students, and create the distinct and vivid image or picture according to the content to be taught, making the students feel as if they are in the scene in person. Situational teaching method can bring children to the teaching activities with a fusion of feelings with natural setting, so that students can study and percept in such circumstances, which is of significance for stimulating students' interest in learning, developing their imagination and guiding their emotional trend.

C. Driven by Task

"Task" is a driving force of class activities. The task-based game has the following characteristics: teachers design the game task as designer for children to complete as players. The whole game should be centered on learners, and teachers should make clear the experience and language points to be acquired by the children through games in the class; and that

we should lay importance to the significance of language, apply real language material in games, promote teaching activities around actual communication activities, and ultimately, the expected goal of learning is achieved when the player complete their tasks. The communicative tasks should also be enriched in the games under the guidance of such concept. Starting from the communicative tasks, we should link up the teaching activities, enabling students to learn and use language while fulfilling a series of true and meaningful “tasks”, constructing students’ language ability and pragmatic ability in the interaction of “practicing” and “using”.

VI. MATTERS NEEDING ATTENTION IN TEACHING DESIGN

A. *Game and Students’ Physical and Mental Characteristics*

While designing games for children’s Chinese teaching, teachers should make clear the target students, and take the factors, such as the language development level, cognition level and physical and mental development level of this group, into full consideration. With respect to children whose mother tongue is not Chinese and who do not understand the affairs of human life, to teach them Chinese, we cannot require them like we require adults, nor can we organize teaching by the strict knowledge system of language. The application of teaching means and methods should be daily life-based and reasonable; the selection and design of games should fit in with the children’s characteristics and demand. Therefore, the games with reasonable requirement for children should be selected. As a result, the games should be designed on the basis of children’s Chinese teaching objective, teaching method, teaching principle and other theories and practical knowledge, with the emphasis on making them obtain the experience integration of two languages (mother tongue and Chinese language). Make children’s Chinese learning a kind of acquisition by experience, and make them percept and experience joyfulness in teaching activities and enjoy the pleasure brought by Chinese teaching activities, so that the learning and living experience of children may be enriched and their intelligence development may be promoted.

B. *Game and Teaching Objective*

Game can stimulate students’ interest in learning beyond all doubt. But teachers should think that should students’ grasping of knowledge or the invigorating of atmosphere in classroom be emphasized in the course of game teaching. Game indeed can enliven the classroom atmosphere and enable the learners to be joyful in the activities, but the original intention of game is to make learners use the language in an interesting, happy and even challengeable environment, improve their ability of language application, and achieve the effect of relax and interesting teaching; the goal is to grasp certain language knowledge through game, form certain language skills, and finally make their language application ability take shape. The games are not aiming to cater to children’s nature of playing or just stay at the level of playing even though the learners are 3-6 years old, but to attract the students’ attention through game, so that they can

concentrate the whole energy upon teaching activities. Stimulate their learning activity and enthusiasm, and bring about the sense of satisfaction and achievement to students. As a result, we should not make the one-sided pursuit of form in terms of the design and organization of games for teaching. Game should serve teaching first of all, and we should make clear its objective, system and orientation. After all, game is just an auxiliary teaching means.

C. *Game and Students’ Participation*

Infant Chinese learners have weak and obscure learning motivation. Game teaching method, however, can create a relaxed, joyful and friendly cooperative learning atmosphere, which can help students to overcome the passive emotion, and to throw into learning actively and unconsciously.

As the designers of the game, teachers should take every factor into consideration and have a comprehensive understanding of children’s character before designing the game. Lack of confidence, depression and anxiety, weak learning motivation will make learners have a feeling of resentment and boredom toward second language learning. During the game process, real-time observation of children’s activities should be performed, so that the scheme may be adjusted in a timely manner once problems are discovered, and children’s loss of interest in the game due to its easiness or complexity be prevented. The character features, existing level, and learning capacity of each student in the class is different, so differentiated teaching should be performed with unified teaching objective. The out-going students with good ability of using Chinese will be more active in the games, and on the contrary, the introvert students with weak ability of using Chinese will be passive. Therefore, each student should be taken into consideration while designing the game, and make endeavor to make every student participate in the game. Children’s learning motivation will be strengthened through games, enabling all of them to feel the joyfulness of learning. The competition-type games should be used cautiously, for one thing, such games will make the failed children feel frustrated, binging negative influence on learning; for another, such game cannot enable more children to be involved in, and when some children loss the experience chance, the original intention of the game is deviated.

VII. CONCLUSION

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language for children has its own uniqueness. Children’s physical and mental characteristics should be considered in teaching. We should improve the joyfulness and interaction of Chinese teaching, make students participate in the language communication and classroom activities, arouse their interest in learning, help them to establish confidence in learning and have a preliminary development of their language application ability and learning ability. Game teaching is an auxiliary teaching means, the goal of game design is to help infant learners to learn and strengthen knowledge about language, and it should have an appropriate proportion in the entire teaching activity. Game should not be overused for increasing

joyfulness, let alone making game the whole content of classroom activity.

As the designer of game, teacher should make clear the goal of game teaching. During the game, observation should be made from time to time to check the teaching objective is completed, or the knowledge points involved are exercised, and the effect of students' acceptance, so as to make adjustment in a timely manner. Second, as the supervisor and judge of the game, teachers should also observe the behavior of each student all the times in addition to observe whether the game is smooth or not, so as to solve the problems encountered by infant learners in the games in a timely manner. Students should also be praised or encouraged when the game is completed, thus they can acquire joyfulness in the game, cultivate confidence in language, and improve effectiveness of Chinese learning.

REFERENCES

- [1] Wang Zhenyu, editor. *Developmental Psychology of Preschool Children* [M]. Beijing: People's Education Press, 2012: 77. (in Chinese)
- [2] Zhang Yanjun, editor. *Research on Kindergarten-based Children's English Teaching Practice* [M]. Beijing: Beijing Normal University Publishing Group, 2009. (in Chinese)
- [3] Zheng Tongtao, Jiang Youjing, Chen Ronglan. *Annual Report on Chinese Teaching in Southeast Asia IV* [J]. *Overseas Chinese Education*, 2014(4) (in Chinese)
- [4] Zhang Juanjuan. *Application of Game Teaching Method in Chinese Class in Thailand* [J]. *Journal of Anyang Normal University*, 2015 (3) (in Chinese)
- [5] Han Ming. *Strategies for Development of Education Resources of Teaching Chinese as A Foreign Language Facing Southeast Asia* [J]. *Journal of Guangxi Normal University (Natural Science Edition)*, 2011(6) (in Chinese).