Principles of Chinese Character Teaching——Based on the Difference Between Chinese Character and Alphabetic Writing

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Abstract: Because of the difference between Chinese character and alphabetic writing, the paper pointed out relative principles of Chinese Character teaching. From the perspective of teaching objects, learners should learn Hanzi theory. From the aspect of teaching materials, the learners have better to start with strokes and pay attention to stroke order. From the aspect of teaching methods, the learners should be inspired and associated with characters.

Keywords: Chinese character teaching; Teaching objects; Teaching materials; Teaching methods

1. Introduction

Nowadays, Chinese have made a huge influence in the world, undoubtedly, her culture including the language. There are increasing need of Chinese language talented people in the world. At the very beginning, characters' teaching was ignored and undeveloped. For those learners in non-Chinese cultural circle, they suffer the most from learning chinese characters and feel hard to recognize, memorize and write down. Why? The most answers they get are that there are huge differences between Chinese characters and alphabetic writing, and there exists several wrong ways in teaching Chinese characters[1]. Wu pointed out "characters teaching is one of the important and difficult part in Chinese language teaching"[2]. Without learning of characters, without learning of Chinese. Then, a focus of researches turns from language itself to principles and theories in learning the characters and to set up the appropriate characters teaching principles.

2. Literature Review

Chinese speak characters language and Indo-European speak alphabetic language. Both have the communicative function, while there are huge difference between them in addition to language itself. A physician vividly described both as one-dimensional space and two dimensional space. The kind of Chinese characters is the latter one for learners have to understand one more critical and complex relationship between characters and its meaning, not spell out its meaning in alphabetic writing. Some research said that ideogram can be used to decrease the reading problems, because kids would not have a lot of reading problems in China compared with USA. It found out the same result that lots of kids can read out the given passage without understanding of its' meaning or the real understanding level would be decreased two grades, which was regarded as a problem and called "deslexia". While in China, few students would have deslexia problem. From 1985, researcher try to compare the reading ability among China, America and Japan. It proved that Chinese have earned significant higher marks than American in the lower grades, while not that much significant in higher grades. Overall, Chinese kids can get an excellent understanding of the text meaning than American. And it proves that the difference between Chinese characters and English letter is the most important factor. Some researchers also did the compared experiment between characters and Hanyu Pinyin. They are two different kind of symbolic system and both can be used to described the same meaning. The results shows that normally grade one students recognize the characters better than Pinyin, character with less strokes faster than character with more strokes, Pinyin with less alphabets better than Pinyin with more alphabets. It has almost the same proves that characters can have its advantage in recognizing the meaning of the words. The language teachers[3] are asked to keep a distance from alphabetic writing and set up a helpful learning model to Chinese characters, based on the real understanding about the nature of Chinese characters. The difference between Chinese characters and alphabetic writing could be roughly divide into four parts, the neural, the thinking way, the formation and the basic unit difference. To wonderfully avoid their bad influence in characters learning, principles in teaching objects, teaching materials and teaching methods should be well considered.

3. Principles in Teaching Objects

3.1 Learning of Hanzi theory

Because Chinses characters and alphabetic writing have totally different script ideas and knowledge skills, characters' teaching should pay attentions on Hanzi theory learning. Hanzi theory contain the formative principles, the basic unit of the characters, the

relationship between Hanyu and Hanzi, ideogram and phonogram etc. to avoid the misused of their alphabetic writing. In other words, the learners should have the knowledge about the reason of writing foundation and the difference between the Chinese characters and alphabetic writing. Teacher gives explanation about the shape, meaning and   to support Chinese character learning, instead of forcing learner to treat it as a picture. Take "安" as an example, teacher describes it as a house and a woman, which means its meaning of security. What's more, teacher would introduce "炎" as two same characters of fire to extend its understanding of hottest. In addition to introduce those relative historical, natural knowledge, case study would be a direct and effective way to explore at the beginning.

4. Principles in Teaching Materials

Chinese characters are made up of many strokes. The points and lines constitute the minimum continuous unit of the Chinese character glyph. According to Zhang's analysis, there are six basic pen shapes and twenty five compound stroke shapes[4]. The name of the stroke is too cumbersome for international students who are new to Chinese characters to remember. Therefore, it is unrealistic and inefficient for them to remember the name of each stroke. So from the teaching practice, teacher could let students remember the five basic stroke names, namely horizontal, vertical, point, and fold. In the basic strokes, there are no circular and curved strokes commonly found in the phonetic characters. Therefore, some students who are not in the Chinese character culture circle would not pay attention to the writing rules of strokes. Therefore, it is necessary to start from the strokes and let the students practice and get familiar with the basic writing of the strokes in Chinese characters and thus, lay a good foundation for the writing of Chinese characters. In the process of writing Chinese characters, in addition to basic strokes, stroke order is also very important. Stroke order is the order in which Chinese characters are written. The basic rules of Chinese strokes are the horizontal and then vertical, from top to bottom, from left to right, from outside to inside and from the outside and inside to outside closed etc.. These stroke order rules basically cover the basic rules of most Chinese characters.

5. Principles in Teaching Methods

Compared with the intensive training from stimulus and response to intensive stimulus, intensive response and intensive memory, inspiration and association can make good use of learners initiation creativity and induction and abstract thinking ability. At the earliest stage, Chinese characters use the glyphs to describe things to record language. However, the means of pictographic methods are too restrictive. Therefore, a large number of methods are used. The result is the confusion of homophones. Therefore, ideograms are added to the fake words, and they are alive. Adding a phonetic symbol to the pictograph, the result is that the phonetic word appears in large numbers. Learners who learn Chinese as a second language always have no ideas about the beginning, logical way and logical methods of the characters and have the original impulse to explore the same ideas with their mother language have. The inspiration and association methods would be helpful. Take "马" as an example. On the one hand, it can be a phonetic symbol."□" pronounce "ma", and is a Pictogram in ancient China. After thousand years of evolution, the shape of "马" gradually changes into a symbol with several lines and strokes. And at the same time, "马" have a firm relationship with the phonetic symbol "ma" and differentiate into "吗", "码", "蚂", "骂" and "犸" by adding morpheme. On the other hand, it can be a ideographic symbol. "驶", "驹", "驾" and "骗" have made use of the meaning of character "马". Learners would have a clear idea about the character beginning of "马" and "ma" after the above explanation.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper makes a deeper analysis about the difference between Chinese character and alphabetic writing from two different perspective, cognitive and literal one. Because of these difference mentioned above, the paper gives out relative principles from the aspects of teaching objects, teaching materials and teaching methods to decrease the bad influence from their existed alphabetic writing. From the aspect of teaching objects, learners should learn Hanzi theory; From the aspect of teaching materials, the learners have better to start with strokes and pay more attention to stroke order,; From the aspect of teaching methods, the learners should be inspired and associated with characters.

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