The Application of Game Teaching Method in Chinese Teaching at Foreign Primary and Secondary Schools

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\textbf{Keywords:} Game Teaching Methods, Primary and Secondary Schools, Chinese Learning.

\textbf{Abstract.} The recent years has witnessed the popularity of Chinese learning in foreign countries. With gradually increasing people beginning to learn Chinese, Chinese learning of a younger age tends to become more evident. Game teaching method is widely used in the Chinese teaching in foreign primary and secondary schools, a method which is featured with certain tasks, entertainment, communication and stimulation. The method is suitable for younger bilingual learners when applied on which the method on and can exert the best teaching effect.

\textbf{Introduction}

Since the Reform and Opening-up have been successfully implemented in China, our country has ushered in constantly steady economic development, increasingly enhanced comprehensive national strength and continuously improved international standing, resulting in a craze for Chinese learning in foreign countries. With more and more people beginning to learn Chinese, Chinese learning of a younger age tends to become more evident. According to statistics, nearly 4,000 primary and secondary schools in America, over 500 in British and over 150 in Germany have offered Chinese courses; besides, more primary and secondary schools in China’s neighboring Asian countries have provided Chinese courses, and some countries even have started Chinese courses for kindergarten students. Therefore, with the younger age tendency of Chinese teaching in foreign countries, it is of great significance to explore Chinese teaching methods that can be applied in foreign primary and secondary schools, so as to further improve the effect of Chinese teaching in foreign primary and secondary schools. For younger learners in primary and secondary schools, Chinese teachers will prefer to employ game teaching method which enables teachers to teach and students to learn in games as well as achieve great teaching effects.

\textbf{Features of Game Teaching Method and its Application in Chinese Class}

Game teaching method stresses to base on characteristics of specific teaching objects and to teach through games. Different scholars have different explanations from different perspectives on the definition of game teaching method. Zeng Jian believes that game teaching method can be interpreted from two senses—broad and narrow senses. In the broad sense, it refers to all organized language teaching activities that are carried out in bilingual or foreign language classes; but in the narrow sense, it refers to language teaching activities that are carried out in bilingual or foreign classes with the aim of stimulating students’ interest in Chinese learning and reinforcing the learnt language knowledge, and that are chiefly characterized by entertainment, flexibility and abundance.[1] Wang Heling thinks that games are organized and interesting teaching activities which aim to achieve intended effects under the guidance of rules. Game teaching method underlines that students should be exposed to organized and guided activities and an atmosphere where they can fully express themselves, through which they can get the hang of teaching contents and at the same time be immersed in the joy of learning when playing games. [2]We assume that the game teaching method in Chinese teaching at foreign primary and secondary schools is targeted at younger bilingual learners. The method can not only help reach the set teaching objectives but also make students acquire the second language in an easy and pleasant way through games.
Compared with traditional teaching methods, game teaching methods, as a new teaching method, is featured with tasks, entertainment, communication and stimulation. Tasks are designed to achieve objectives of language learning in games. Teachers should guide their students to play games, but not simple games. Rather, teaching contents are integrated in the games, with the purpose of achieving teaching goals. Entertainment is the fundamental feature of games. During games, Chinese learners can fully experience the happiness that games can bring to them, so their thirst for knowledge and motivation for learning can be triggered. Communication means that students should use language to communicate in games, so their interpersonal relationship can be improved. Stimulation means that teaching games can stimulate students’ desire to express themselves. In particular, games with competitions and rewards are more appealing to students. In addition, students’ cooperation and team spirits can be developed in games.

Game teaching method is suitable for younger bilingual learners and can achieve great teaching effects on them.

Firstly, game teaching method agrees with the physical growth of teenagers, which is more likely to stimulate teenagers’ interest in learning. Students in primary and secondary schools are at an age when they are active and vivacious, lack of self-control, who have shorter attention span. Thus, for language teaching of these students, we cannot let them sit there just listening or sometimes speaking. It is of no use, because for them interest is what actually matters. It is impossible for them to learn things that they are not interested in. However, if their interest is motivated, they can absorb the teaching contents in a far more effective way than adults do. Therefore, when teaching is combined with games, teenagers’ enthusiasm for Chinese learning can be enhanced, and the objective of language learning can be fulfilled.

Secondly, game teaching method enables students to understand and command teaching contents and meanwhile develop their communicative competence. Many input materials of language learning come from life. When students are accessible to games with life situations, they can feel they are personally in the situation where they can feel the charm of Chinese language, develop their communicative competence and have their communicative demands satisfied. Game teaching method ‘endeavors to change the traditional teaching mode in which teachers only need to lecture and students only need to listen. On the contrary, through games, students can actively practice Chinese and become the subjects of classes in the true sense.

Design of Teaching Games and Matters Demanding Attention

There are various teaching games in Chinese classes. According to different language focuses, the games can be classified into phonetic, vocabulary, grammar and discourse games. Teaching games, with different forms, contents, difficulty and demands, are suitable for different stages of teaching and different types of teaching classes. Besides, teachers should appropriately select language games with differently difficult levels according to different demands of teaching and students’ different proficiency in Chinese language. As long as students’ learning enthusiasm is fully motivated can games exert intended effects. Hereby we take phonetic and vocabulary teaching for example to explore how to design teaching games and provide some suggestions for prospective researches.

Phonetic learning is tedious. Especially at the initial stage of phonetic learning, the phonetic training of initial consonants and vowels and the combination of sounds can drive students crazy. Therefore, teachers can apply game teaching method in phonetic teaching. Phonetic games, includes listening and reading sounds, pointing and reading sounds, dictation and error correction, telling right from wrong and so on. For example, in the spelling and game of initial consonants and vowels, teachers can divide students into two groups, one of which should hold cards with initial consonants and the other of which should hold cards with vowels. Teachers then should randomly read out a word which should consist of an initial consonant and a vowel. Students who hold the correspondent cards should stand up. Or students in the two groups can randomly match another student to create a new spelling and one student should read the word. Tones can also be involved in the game. Students shall be divided into three groups, the third group of which should hold the
cards of the first, second, third, fourth and neutral tones. Cards can be randomly matched or teachers should be responsible for selecting characters. The kind of phonetic games can strengthen and consolidate phonetic learning and teaching in an easy and pleasant environment.

Game teaching method has given birth to many application study on Chinese vocabulary teaching. To conduct vocabulary teaching, teachers can divide students into two groups and give out two prepared sets of cards with same contents to the two groups, with one students holding two or three cards. Students in the one group respectively hold the same cards as students in the other group. Rules of the game should be clarified to students ahead. When teachers say a word, for example, “apple”, students holding the two cards with “apple” on should immediately stand up and simultaneously say out the word “apple”. The one who is the first to stand up and has the best pronunciation can earn one point for his or her group. The group with the highest points can win. Students can move themselves in the game, and their enthusiasm can be fully motivated. At the same time, the game also develops students’ quick-reaction ability and team work. [4] Apart from the game, games of vocabulary teaching also include stringing up idioms, color guessing, and synonym and antonyms classifying.

Some matters should be paid attention to when one designs teaching game is being designed. All games should be designed to regard learners as subjects, so when designing games, one should take into consideration characteristics and backgrounds of learners. For example, ages, knowledge levels and interests. According to different characteristics of game participants, the difficulty level, duration, frequency, evaluation criteria, props of games can correspondingly be different. For example, in regard to ages and props, teachers should select games which have simple rules and are entertaining and relatively safe for primary school students. If they choose complicated games, the younger students will feel powerless and less interested. Besides, for younger students, teachers should consider the safety issue when choosing and using props. Games should make younger students feel happy and safe. On the other hand, for secondary school students who are relatively older, teachers should choose complicated and highly competitive games because if games are too easy for them, they will not be interested. When preparing for class games, teachers should also understand and analyze students’ backgrounds, know their differences and interests, so they can choose games that correspond to students’ competence and interests. In addition, teachers should encourage and guide individual students.[5] As the designers and organizers of games, teachers should be fair and just, and should not throw cold water on students’ enthusiasm. However, every coin has two sides. Though game teaching method motivates students’ interest in learning and stimulates their enthusiasm, having more advantages over other teaching methods, we should also be aware that passion for playing is rooted in our genes, especially for younger teenagers. In the tedious language learning, most students cannot resist the temptation of games, so some are attracted to games and distracted and ignore the teaching contents that they should master. Under this circumstance, game teaching method loses its original significance.

Conclusion

Game teaching method cannot be simply regarded as a teaching method. Instead, we should see it as a buffering platform which provides zero-resistance communication between teachers and students, and among students. The aim of learning a language is to turn the language into a tool for communication. When teaching techniques are properly selected and applied, students can easily master and apply target languages.[6] It has been found that the advantages of teachers giving correct guidance to students on playing games in Chinese classes at foreign primary and secondary schools outweigh its disadvantages. The method to a great extent improves students’ interest in learning. It uses teenagers’ love for playing games and the attention-grabbing feature of games, so it is of great help to make students use correct learning methods and form good learning habits. Unlike traditional teaching methods which are serious and inflexible, game teaching method enables students to learn Chinese in an easy and pleasant environment which can facilitate them to master Chinese in a more effective and easy way.
References


