

Original Paper

The Application of Chinese Songs in Teaching Chinese Language Sense as a Foreign Language

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Abstracts

Language sense is a skill, and cultivating students' language sense ability has theoretical and practical significance for language teaching. However, compared with English, French, and other universally taught languages, more research needs to be done on teaching language sense in Chinese as a foreign language. Therefore, based on the advanced theories of language sense research, we discuss the role of Chinese songs in cultivating Chinese language sense to put forward some constructive suggestions for teaching language sense in Chinese as a foreign language.

Keywords

TCFL, Language-Sense Teaching, Chinese Songs

1. Introduction

The ultimate goal of teaching Chinese as a foreign language is to cultivate Chinese learners' ability to communicate in Chinese, which shows the importance of oral language teaching in teaching Chinese as a foreign language skills. However, for second language learners, many factors affect oral expression, and sense of language ability is one of them. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Xia Mianzun, a famous educationist in China, in his article "My Recent Beliefs on Teaching Chinese Literature - Infecting Students with a Sense of Language", first put forward the concept of the "sense of language", which he defined as the perception of language. He believed that when seeing a text, students should not only be asked to be able to read and write the text but should also be asked to savor the deeper emotions behind the text. To have an emotional resonance with the text, one should have a highly keen sense of the text, and this solid and keen sense of the text, in his opinion, is the sense of language. After that, Lu Shuxiang put forward "the primary task of language sense" in 1979, which was the first time to form the theory of language sense systematically. After that, domestic scholars carried out more and more in-depth explorations on the application of the sense of language in the field of language teaching,

but they were only limited to the field of language teaching. It was in the 1980s that the sense of language began to enter other fields of research, and scholars from different fields conducted fruitful research on the sense of language from their professional perspectives.

However, due to the late start of the discipline of Chinese as a foreign language education, it was only at the beginning of this century that research related to language sense began to appear in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Zhou Jian (2005), in his book “Exploring the Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language Sense”, first put forward the idea that second language teaching should be oriented to the cultivation of language sense. He believes that cultivating language sense should be at the center of teaching. Language teaching must cultivate learners’ language sense ability to improve teaching efficiency. Based on this, he advocates the construction of teaching materials that can effectively develop the ability of Chinese language sense and provides constructive practices for the innovation of teaching materials. After that, he also elaborated on the establishment of the concept of the language sense development model in the article “Trial Discussion on the Establishment of the Teaching Model of Chinese Language Sense Development” and pointed out that expanding input, familiarization of reading and recitation, communicative context, and teacher-directed explanations are the four major principles and methods of the teaching model of language sense development.

Zhang Wangxi (2007) suggests that the Chinese language sense includes at least six aspects: phonological sense, Chinese character sense, lexical sense, grammatical sense, discourse sense, and cognitive sense. He believes that the basic theory and ideology of teaching Chinese as a foreign language need to be shifted to the cultivation of second language learners’ sense of language because learning a second language is essentially a process of establishing and gradually developing a second language sense of language.

Zhao Chunli (2018) similarly argues that second language teaching should adhere to the basic principle of training students’ language sense ability. Based on this, he proposes that to cultivate second language learners’ Chinese language sense ability, we should first theoretically sort out the ontology, epistemology, comprehension, judgment, and causation theories about the sense of language and then later design a systematic, operable, and verifiable theory of efficient teaching based on the above theories of the sense of language in terms of the teaching practice.

The above scholars’ opinions show the importance of language sense development in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. In the face of the global trend of Chinese language fever in recent years, paying attention to the study of how to cultivate second language learners’ sense of language ability in teaching Chinese as a foreign language is an essential solution to the great challenge of “how to maximize the efficiency of teaching Chinese as a foreign language”. However, in the current research on Chinese as a Foreign Language teaching, more attention should be paid to cultivating Chinese language sense ability, and even fewer concrete teaching practices have been proposed to cultivate learners’ language sense ability. Based on the advanced theories of language sense research mentioned above, this paper will discuss the role of Chinese songs in the cultivation of Chinese language sense

and finally put forward some methods of how to use Chinese songs in the cultivation of Chinese language sense for Chinese learners, intending to provide some operational and reference teaching programs for the teaching of language sense in Chinese as a foreign language.

2. The Role of Chinese Songs Applied to the Teaching of Chinese Language Sense

Before discussing the role of Chinese songs in cultivating the sense of language in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, we need to elaborate on how to acquire the sense of language. There are two ways to acquire a sense of language, and one is “natural speech practice”, that is, through a large amount of exposure to speech, the rules of language itself accumulate in the subject’s brain to a relatively complete and consolidated degree, thus forming a language structure. “When a book is read a hundred times, its meaning is self-evident”, and it is mainly through this way that the sense of mother tongue is acquired. Acquiring a sense of language in a second language is also inseparable from this. The other is “conscious speech practice”, that is to say, under the guidance of teaching theory, consciously learning typical speech materials and language knowledge, as well as social and cultural knowledge as the background of language, and summarizing the rules of language.

In general, it can correspond to the two ways of knowledge acquisition by humans: unconscious “implicit learning” and “purposeful explicit learning”. In second language acquisition, language proficiency is achieved over time but gradually builds up in the learning process. In other words, a second language learner needs to accumulate knowledge of the target language before entering the trial and error stage, the “natural speech practice” stage. Therefore, in acquiring a sense of language, these two ways of acquiring a sense of language are not superior or inferior but equally important, and they are in a relationship of precedence and continuity and play a typical role. Therefore, the author will focus on the positive role of Chinese songs in the “conscious speech practice” stage.

2.1 Chinese Songs and Voice Sense

First, the relationship between language and music is already very close. Wang Li (1990), a modern Chinese linguist, pointed out that “the relationship between language and music is very close, and there is interoperability between language and music”. As a sound-based tool for conveying information and expressing emotions, Marx has also recognized music as “the second language of mankind”. The three essential elements of music are pitch, rhythm, and timbre, and the phonetic characteristics of the Chinese language are precisely in line with these three essential elements of music. Meanwhile, Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan languages, and its syllables are composed of three parts: consonants, rhymes, and tones, and the change of tones is also one of the characteristics of Chinese. Tone changes include the level tone, the rising tone, the falling-rising tone, and the falling tone. Its permutations and combinations give the Chinese language a rhythmic sense of staccato. This kind of rhythmic sense of Chinese speech with its high and low changes also coincides with the expression form of music. Therefore, while appreciating the rhythm and melody of the songs, Chinese songs also help to improve the learners’ ability to recognize sounds and pronounce Chinese. Ultimately, the goal is

to improve the phonological sense of second language learners.

2.2 Chinese Songs and Vocabulary Sense

Chinese songs are rich in themes and all-encompassing, and the vocabulary used in the lyrics is primarily daily idioms. Most of the lyrics are straightforward to understand, and most of the language materials and expressions come from daily life, which is more likely to arouse the learners' interest and enthusiasm and more likely to be accepted by Chinese language learners. Therefore, the application of Chinese songs to the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language can not only help students better understand the meaning of words and their usage but also help them understand the meaning of words in specific contexts, make their memory of words more profound, and thus improve their sense of Chinese vocabulary.

2.3 Chinese Songs and Grammatical Sense

The fact that Chinese grammar does not emphasize the order of words but the meaning of words makes grammar learning especially difficult for second language learners. In addition to the complexity of Chinese grammar, grammar teaching in Chinese as a Foreign Language classroom often needs to be more exciting and acceptable to learners. Even teaching grammar is difficult, not to mention cultivating learners' sense of Chinese grammar. Chinese songs are rich in grammar teaching materials; some contain repetitive sentences or chorus parts emphasizing grammatical structures. These songs can be used to consolidate grammar points vividly, turning abstraction into concrete and tangible. As a result, applying Chinese songs in teaching Chinese as a foreign language can effectively improve the learners' sense of grammar while changing the classroom atmosphere of grammar knowledge explanation from boring to lively and exciting.

2.4 Chinese Songs and Discourse Sense

For learners of Chinese as a foreign language, the transition from "sentence" to "piece" is a significant difficulty. Even if learners have already mastered a lot of Chinese language knowledge, in real communication situations, instead of memorizing the whole text, they can freely express themselves at random and answer the questions of the communicators freely. However, they still often have ideas but cannot express them logically and coherently. It is an excellent sign of the need for a sense of parts of speech. On the other hand, Chinese songs are often developed by a theme, and different descriptions and expressions are used in a song to illustrate a core idea, which is conducive to improving learners' discourse sense in a relaxed and subtle context.

2.5 Chinese Songs and Sense of Awareness

First of all, according to the affective filtering hypothesis proposed by Stephen D. Krashen, the process of second language acquisition will be affected by three affective factors: the learner's motivation, personality, and affective state. Motivation is the intrinsic power that motivates an individual to engage in a particular behavior; if the learner is strongly motivated and driven, the learning efficiency is higher, and the learning effect will be better; the affective state mainly refers to anxiety and relaxation; if the learner has a weaker sense of anxiety, a high degree of mental relaxation and a low affective barrier,

they are prone to get more input. Both are constantly changing under the influence of subjective factors of second language learners. Applying Chinese songs in teaching Chinese as a foreign language can enliven the classroom atmosphere, reduce the learners' sense of boredom in learning Chinese, enhance their motivation to learn Chinese, reduce their anxiety about second language learning, stimulate their interest in learning Chinese, and make them actively participate in the process of second language learning.

Secondly, from the division of labor between the left and right brains, it can be found that the left brain processes language. Still, if the right brain can be brought into full play in second language learning, it will be more conducive to the learners' language learning. Chinese songs are characterized by shallow content, lively language, and a distinctive sense of rhyme and rhythm. Applying them to Chinese as a foreign language classroom can cause Chinese learners pleasure, make both the left and right hemispheres of their brains enter into a state of excitement, which can promote the learning of Chinese, and finally improve their sense of cognition of Chinese language.

3 The Application of Chinese Songs in Teaching Chinese Language Sense as a Foreign Language

3.1 Selecting Pedagogically Meaningful Songs for Inclusion in the Textbook

In the currently prevailing Chinese language teaching materials, only some are specifically designed to cultivate the ability of language sense. This phenomenon is expected based on the specificity of acquiring language sense. However, adding some innovative points to the current textbooks is feasible by choosing songs from the textbooks. However, not all Chinese songs help teach Chinese as a foreign language.

The choice of songs should not be just for learning to sing. First, we must consider the students' Chinese language level and cognitive ability and choose songs suitable for their current language level in combination with the "Chinese Vocabulary and Characters Proficiency Syllabus". Secondly, it is also necessary to consider whether the songs chosen are representative and meaningful for teaching and whether they can emphasize the uniqueness of the Chinese language, are practical, have the right level of difficulty, and are in line with the characteristics of learners at different stages and in different countries, as well as their cultural level and personal interests.

After selecting meaningful songs to be included in the teaching materials, when applying Chinese songs in the classroom of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers should first define the teaching objectives of the lesson according to the characteristics of the target learners. The teaching objectives should cover the cognitive, skill and affective domains. Language sense teaching is teaching in the abstract sense and teaching second language learners to learn Chinese culture. Secondly, due to the diversity and complexity of the linguistic and cultural knowledge involved in some Chinese songs, it is necessary to teach the language knowledge and introduce the cultural background before playing the songs to make the students understand the songs' content better and effectively achieve the teaching objectives. By making such preparations, students can consolidate what they have learned and better

understand the cultural connotations of the songs. Otherwise, second language learners will likely need clarification after listening to the song.

3.2 Organization of Singing Competitions

The language environment is essential for second language acquisition and language sense development. The efficiency and effectiveness of learners learning Chinese in non-Chinese and Chinese-speaking environments differ. Therefore, in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, building an immersive environment is very helpful in cultivating second language learners' language sense. With the advancement of science and technology and the development of multimedia technology, more and more teachers of Chinese as a foreign language have begun to use different multimedia resources to build an immersive learning environment in teaching Chinese as a foreign language and have achieved remarkable results.

Although organizing Chinese song singing contests is not as good as creating a language atmosphere in a summer or winter camp that lasts for a whole vacation, it is less effective in creating a language at most here in the teaching environment and time. However, it is more flexible regarding teaching environment and time and can be realized in daily Chinese as a foreign language teaching classroom. Moreover, it combines visualization, fun and professionalism, making learning the Chinese language knowledge more straightforward and psychologically acceptable for the learners. Even under the condition that there are rewards, learners' interest and enthusiasm will be greatly enhanced. Students will take the initiative to get in touch with and understand the language and cultural knowledge embedded in Chinese songs. They will also take the initiative to memorize the songs in singing competitions.

In this way, the learners' exposure to the Chinese language is broadened, the time they spend using the Chinese language is increased, and the whole environment of the song practice and competition is more closed so that the students can be immersed in the Chinese language environment for a while. It also aligns with the principle of expanding input, familiarization, and recitation in the language development teaching mode.

3.3 Enhancing Intercultural Communication Awareness through Song Comparison between Native and Target Languages

It is essential to enhance learners' cross-cultural communication awareness in cultivating second language learners' Chinese sense. Because for L2 learners, it is difficult to change their sense of language once it is established, and the stereotyped thinking of their mother tongue culture may cause them to be prejudiced against the target language culture. But cultural connotation as an inseparable and essential part of Chinese language sense is nonsense if second language learners cannot accept it, then cultivating the ability of Chinese language sense is only nonsense. Therefore, when applying Chinese songs, students can be invited to share the same theme or type of songs in their mother tongue and then discuss their similarities and differences with Chinese songs in class. You can also assign homework at the end of the class for each student to share one of their favorite Chinese songs in the

next class so that the students can share and discuss the music they like to listen to together. To deepen and consolidate the language knowledge learners have acquired and maintain their interest. In this way, the learners' interest and initiative can be enhanced, as well as their cross-cultural awareness.

4. Conclusion

In the booming development of Chinese as a Foreign Language education, the challenge of teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language has changed from "how to teach" to "how to teach well". Nowadays, teaching Chinese as a foreign language is about teaching foreigners to speak Chinese and teaching foreigners to speak Chinese well. It is urgent to cultivate second language learners' Chinese language sense ability and improve teaching efficiency.

Based on the advanced theories of the current research on language sense, this paper takes Chinese songs as the specific content of the teaching experiment on language sense cultivation, first discusses the role of Chinese songs in five aspects of the cultivation of Chinese language sense, and finally puts forward three suggestions on how to utilize Chinese songs in the cultivation of Chinese language sense of the Chinese learners based on the basic principles of the cultivation of language sense and the way of acquiring language sense, hoping to provide a practical and practical suggestion on the cultivation of Chinese language sense of teaching Chinese as a foreign language to teach Chinese as a foreign language. We hope to provide an operative teaching program for teaching the Chinese language sense to foreigners.

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