

## *Original Paper*

# Talking about “Keeping” and “Changing” in Teaching Chinese Characters to Foreigners: Taking the Partial Character “quan” as an Example

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### **Abstract**

*Teaching Chinese characters to foreigners has always been the focus and difficulty of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The article focuses on analyzing the two major issues of “keeping” and “changing” in teaching Chinese characters to foreigners. “Keeping” means the goal and mission of teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, and it is believed that we should clarify the essential features of Chinese characters that are different from other characters; have a general understanding and grasp of the whole Chinese character symbol system; identify the relationship between Chinese characters and Chinese words. It is believed that one should clarify the essential features of Chinese characters that make them different from other characters, have a general understanding and grasp of the entire Chinese character symbolic system, and identify the relationship between Chinese characters (words) and Chinese language (words). “Changes” means the development path of teaching Chinese characters to foreigners. Taking the character “犬” as an example, we analyze its connotation and the comparison between ancient and modern times around the ShuoWenJieZi. Subsequently, the development path is proposed to emphasize the spatial distribution of radicals while taking into account the concept of stroke order, and to emphasize the explanation of the rationale for the construction of Chinese characters. In terms of teaching, the combination of science and technology will promote innovative changes in teaching methods and transform the teaching body.*

### **Keywords**

*teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, the partial character “犬”, goal, path*

## 1. Introductory

Chinese characters are the crystallization of the great invention and wisdom of the Chinese nation, an important pillar running through the life of human society, and a key bridge for Chinese culture to the world. General Secretary Xi once pointed out that “traditional cultural resources should be systematically sorted out, so that cultural relics collected in forbidden palaces, heritage displayed on the vast land, and characters written in ancient books can all come to life” (Xi, 2014). Chinese characters, which carry 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, have had an important influence on the progress of writing and cultural development of countries all over the world, and the topic of “Chinese character fever” is common, and the problem of “difficulty in teaching Chinese characters” has arisen as a result. Teaching Chinese characters to foreigners has always been a major difficulty in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, which is related to the uniqueness of Chinese characters, the stagnation of teaching concepts, and the inappropriate choice of teaching methods etc. The following is a summary of current research on Chinese characters. Starting from the current situation of research on Chinese characters, the following article will point out the main goals and missions of teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, and explore and research the teaching paths in response to the series of problems in teaching, so as to realize the perfect combination of “keeping” and “changing” in the teaching of Chinese characters.

## 2. Status of Current Research

The author collects research on the field of characters from four core journals, Chinese Language Teaching in the World, Language Teaching and Research, Application of Language and Literature, and Chinese Language Teaching and Research, over the past ten years (2013-2022), and finds that it mainly focuses on the research on the ontology of Chinese characters, the research on the teaching of Chinese characters, and the research on Chinese character cognition and acquisition, as described below Table 1.

**Table 1. Statistics on the Number of Studies on Chinese Characters in Journals such as World Chinese Language Teaching in the Past Ten Years (2013-2022)**

	Chinese Language Teaching in the World	Language Teaching and Research	Application of Language and Literature	Chinese Language Teaching and Research
<b>2013</b>	0	1 (ontology)	5 (Teaching 2, Ontology 3)	2 (Ontology 1, Acquisition 1)
<b>2014</b>	2 (Teaching 1, Acquisition 1)	0	0	3 (Acquisition 1, Ontology 2)
<b>2015</b>	1 (Teaching)	4 (Teaching 1, Acquisition 3)	5 (Teaching 1, Ontology 4)	1 (Teaching)
<b>2016</b>	0	3 (Ontology 2, Acquisition 1)	7 (Teaching 2, Ontology 5)	2 (Acquisition 1, Instruction 1)
<b>2017</b>	0	0	3 (ontology)	2 (teaching)
<b>2018</b>	0	1 (acquired)	4 (Teaching 1, Ontology 3)	0
<b>2019</b>	0	1 (acquired)	0	1 (ontology)
<b>2020</b>	1 (acquired)	0	0	0
<b>2021</b>	0	0	2 (ontology)	0
<b>2022</b>	1 (acquired)	0	3 (acquired)	2 (teaching)
<b>(grand total)</b>	5 (Teaching 2, Acquisition 3)	10 (Acquisition 6, Ontology 3, Teaching 1)	29 (Ontology 20, Teaching 6, Acquisition 3)	13 (Teaching 6, Ontology 4, Acquisition 3)

The author also counted the total number of articles published in the four journals mentioned above in the past ten years, and calculated the percentage of Chinese character research and Chinese character teaching in the overall number of publications separately, as follows Table 2.

**Table 2. Statistics on the Percentage of Research on Chinese Characters and their Teaching in Journals such as Teaching Chinese as a Second Language in the World in the Past Ten Years (2013-2022)**

Journal Name	fixed number of years	Total number of communications	Number of Chinese character studies	Percentage of studies in Chinese characters (to one decimal place)	Number of kanji teaching	Percentage of teaching of Chinese characters (to one decimal place)
Chinese Language Teaching in the World	2013-2022	513	5	1.0%	2	0.4%
Language Teaching and Research		713	10	1.4%	1	0.1%
Application of Language and Literature		753	29	3.9%	6	0.8%
Chinese Language Teaching and Research		474	13	2.7%	6	1.3%
(grand) total		2453	57	2.3%	15	0.6%

From the statistical results of the data in Tables 1 and 2, in terms of longitudinal time comparison, the number of studies about Chinese character research in the past ten years is negligible, and the research in the field of teaching Chinese characters is even less, accounting for less than half of the Chinese character research in all four journals mentioned above, with the lowest percentage being 10%. Taking five years as the dividing line, the research on teaching Chinese characters in the past five years (2018-2022) is significantly less than that in the previous five years (2013-2017), which shows that the attention paid to the research on teaching Chinese characters in the past five years is even lower than that before, and that the “research fever on teaching Chinese characters” is imminent in China.

In terms of the horizontal comparison of the main contents of the journals, the four journals mentioned above have the largest number of research on Chinese characters in the past ten years, which is the study of Chinese character ontology, with a total of 27 papers; the study of teaching Chinese characters and the study of Chinese character acquisition have the same number of papers, both of which are 15 papers. It can be seen that the study of teaching Chinese characters does not occupy much space in the overall study of Chinese characters, and in recent years, the study of Chinese character ontology has been developing steadily as in the past, and the study of Chinese character acquisition has been developing more and more maturely, so the study of teaching Chinese characters, which is a traditional field of study, has not been paid much attention by scholars in recent years. Has the problem of teaching concepts and teaching methods of Chinese characters, which has always been called “the roadblock for foreign students to learn Chinese”, been fundamentally solved? Does the fact that the research on teaching Chinese characters to foreigners has tended to become more subdued in recent years mean that teaching Chinese characters to foreigners is not important? The answer is definitely in the negative. During his visit to the Yinxu site in Anyang, Henan Province, General Secretary Xi emphasized that “Chinese characters are very remarkable, and the formation and development of the Chinese nation could not have been achieved without the maintenance of Chinese characters” (Xi, 2022). The “Chinese Character Teaching and Research Fever” was once again set off in China, and the First Academic Symposium on Teaching and Research of Chinese Characters was held in December 2022, which pushed forward the field of teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, and the teaching of Chinese characters to foreigners came back into people’s view.

### **3. “Guarding” the Teaching of Chinese Characters to Foreigners—Analysis of the Main Objectives and Missions**

#### *3.1 Clarify the Essential Characteristics of Chinese Characters that Make them Different from other Characters*

Chinese characters, as ideographic characters, are a combination of form, sound and meaning, and are one of the oldest and most highly developed scripts in the world. Compared to pinyin characters, Chinese characters are difficult to memorize, read, recognize and learn, which indeed makes learning more difficult for students from the pinyin system. Taking English as an example, English belongs to the category of phonetic writing, which uses a small number of symbols to represent a limited number of phonemes and syllables, and serves as the alphabet for marking the sounds of words sound. Generally speaking, certain sounds are represented by certain letters, and certain letters represent certain sounds. People have mastered the rules of pronunciation and spelling of letters, they can write down the sound of a raw word by and large when they hear it, and they can read out the phonetic sound it represents when they see the form of a raw word. On the contrary, Chinese characters, which are phonetic scripts, do not use dozens of letters to record dozens of phonemes and hundreds of syllables in

morphemes and words, but use thousands of symbols to represent the meaning of the morphemes or words, and at the same time incidentally represent the sounds of the morphemes.

In addition, Chinese characters have transcended time and space, transcended geographical limitations, and survived through thousands of years of history to the present day. The Chinese characters we see today are already related to but not identical with the ancient writing system, and the whole tends to be simplified, and this process of development and evolution is not found in the writing of other linguistic systems, which is unique, so although the historical process of the evolution of Chinese characters is not taken into account as a content of teaching, it can be taken into account in the teaching process to enhance the interest of teaching and to improve the enthusiasm of foreign students in learning. Therefore, although the historical process of the evolution of Chinese characters is not taken as the teaching content, the teaching process can be implicated in order to enhance the interest of the teaching and increase the motivation of foreign students to learn Chinese characters. In terms of writing, Chinese characters are also very different from other characters. Chinese characters are flat, square characters, not just two-way linear characters, but square blocks that unfold in all directions. There are clear boundaries between each character, and unlike pinyin characters such as English, which are written in separate words, Chinese characters do not need a separator to distinguish them, and do not cause confusion in their use.

Generally speaking, Chinese characters have a distinctive uniqueness different from other characters. In teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, foreign students should make it clear that their own national characters are different from Chinese characters in every aspect, and avoid as much as possible the influence brought by their own national characters, so that they can feel the profoundness of Chinese characters.

### *3.2 Identifying the Relationship between Chinese Characters (Words) and Chinese Language (Words)*

Compared with other scripts, the relationship between Chinese characters and the Chinese language is very close and special. First of all, Chinese characters record the Chinese language in a non-monotonous way, and there are three main cases: one character corresponds to one word - mainly referring to many monosyllabic words in Chinese, such as “人, 跑”, etc.; one character records one element—mainly referring to two-syllable compound words, such as “学校, 沙滩” etc.; one character records one syllable—contains continuous words, superimposed words, and phonetic words, such as “沙发, 可口可乐” etc. Secondly, Chinese characters record Chinese with special validity. Chinese belongs to the Sino-Tibetan language family, the Chinese language itself has fixed syllables, and there are a lot of morphemes or monosyllabic words recorded in syllables. If the four tones are counted as four syllables, then there are more than 1,300 syllables in modern Chinese, and there are more than 6,000 common morphemes, which means that more than 6,000 morphemes are recorded with more than 1,300 syllables, which leads to a great number of homophonic morphemes, for example, “致癌-治癌”. The reason why kana cannot completely replace kanji in Japanese is that kanji in Japanese also have

the function of differentiating meaning. Therefore, the application of Chinese characters to the complexity of Chinese linguistic units and to the large number of homophonic morphemes and homophonic monosyllabic words in the Chinese language is extremely special compared with pinyin writing. Again, from the point of view of the path of semantic access, the characters used in a script determine the path by which the text reaches its semantics. As early as in the 1980s, Mr. Peng Danling (PENG, GUO, & ZHANG, 1985) said in his research that when extracting meaning, people have both morphophonetic and morpho-syntactic pathways. Pinyin characters use phonetic symbols to reach semantics (morphophonemic) through speech; Chinese characters make extensive use of both phonetic symbols and meaning symbols. For the extraction of information from Chinese characters, the meaning does not necessarily have to be encoded in speech, but may be derived directly from the character form. This also confirms, from the perspective of experimental data, that the acquisition of Chinese characters is different from the acquisition of other characters, and the special status of Chinese character glyphs in Chinese character teaching is highlighted.

Finally, there have been numerous studies on the relationship between Chinese characters and Chinese words, the most famous of which is the “character-based” versus “word-based” debate. The word-based system, which began to appear in linguistics from Ma Jianzhong’s *MaShiWentong*, is based on the essence of Western linguistics, and is a more popular theoretical system at present. However, in the face of the many differences between Chinese grammar and Western grammar, many scholars have questioned the word-based approach and hoped to develop a system that is unique to the study of Chinese language. The word-based system was proposed by Mr. David Hsu on the basis of the local study of the Chinese language, which takes words as the basic structural unit of the Chinese language for in-depth study and highlights the characteristics of the Chinese language. Although the word-based system was challenged when it was first proposed, in recent years, the number of scholars who hold a positive viewpoint on it has been increasing day by day. The above is a theoretical debate about the word-based approach, but in the world of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, there is still a debate between the word-based approach and the word-based approach, and the main issue is whether to start teaching based on the word or to use the word as the basic unit of language teaching and create sentences from the word to achieve the teaching goal. The main issue is whether to teach on the basis of words or to take words as the basic unit of language teaching and make sentences from them to achieve the teaching purpose. Different theories are reflected in the teaching materials of Chinese as a foreign language, such as the word-based theory represented by Miyajima Daihachi’s “The Official Story of the Chinese Language”, and the word-based theory represented by Bai Lesang’s “The Enlightenment of Chinese Language and Writing” etc. In the author’s opinion, any kind of language teaching should be based on words (Ni, 2018). In the author’s opinion, there are advantages and disadvantages to any kind of language teaching. Based on the “word-based” approach, although international students can use and master the language faster, the biggest problem is the division of

Chinese words, which is one of the key issues that have been debated in the linguistic field. At the same time, there are also some strange mistakes: for example, learners have already learned the word “结婚”, but when they see the word “婚礼”, they do not recognize the character “婚”, which is a reflection of the “word-origin” principle. This reflects the disadvantages of “word-based” teaching. On the other hand, “word-based” teaching is based on the most traditional Chinese characters, which are used to form words, sentences and chapters, which is in line with the gradual process of learners’ mastery of the Chinese language. In the case of young children learning Chinese nowadays, they always go through the process of recognizing characters first and then learning words, which is due to the cognitive law of the people (Liu, 2008). However, the biggest disadvantage of the word-based approach is that the ability to use the language is not strong, and due to the emphasis on literacy, the teaching can easily become “scattered” and unsystematic, and it can also lead to confusion of words and phrases. Based on the above, the author believes that Chinese as a foreign language teaching should be based on “word-based” teaching, and “word-based” teaching should give equal importance to “word-based” teaching, and take the essence of both, so as to avoid all kinds of problems to the greatest extent possible. As Chinese language teachers, we should be clear about what we as Chinese language teachers should clearly and silently apply in the classroom, and what we as Chinese language teachers should teach to foreign learners. We should clarify the learning objectives of Chinese language learners, and propose teaching methods that are effective and purpose-oriented.

#### **4. Taking the Character “犬” as an Example of “Change” in the Teaching of Chinese Characters to Foreigners—A Study of the Main Paths**

##### *4.1 Overview of the Character “犬” (Dog)*


The character “犬” in *ShuoWenJiezi*, Volume 10, is explained as follows: “狗之有縣蹠者也。象形。孔子曰：‘視犬之字如畫狗也。’凡犬之屬皆从犬。(Xu, 1963)” In *Shuowen Jiezi*, the characters of the “canine” section are mainly included in the “canine” and “𤝵”, of which there are a total of 83 characters in the “canine” section. There are 83 characters in the “犬” section, such as “狗、狼、臭” etc., and 2 characters in the “𤝵” section. The “犬” characters in *ShuoWenJiezi* are typical of the ancient Chinese concepts of word-making, the development of the people’s social life, and the progress of hunting activities.


##### *4.1.1 The “犬” Part of the Character and the Concept of Word-making Thinking*

Since ancient times, Chinese characters related to “犬” (dog) have been emphasized by people, and are closely related to people’s social life, representing the concept of “taking things from afar” in the creation of characters. Taking the characters “犬” and “狗” as an example, they are often associated with each other, and are also mentioned in the explanation of “Shuowen” (说文), which states that “犬” and “狗” are commonly used in the common sense. In the *Shuowen* interpretation, it is also mentioned that “犬” and “狗” are a class of animals in the common sense, and in ancient times, they were related





in meaning, but the division of labor between dog and canine is different, and it is generally believed that “canine” refers to a hunting dog, and “dog” refers to a watchdog. From the shape of the character


can also be seen, “犬” (oracle bone: ) character shape legs long waist, tail long, athletic, good at


running, so with the ancient hunting activities close relationship; “狗” (oracle bone: ) compared to the “犬” character short legs and tail long. The word “狗” is shorter and more rounded than the word “犬”, which shows that the ancient people’s thinking and concepts of word-making were closely related to their social life needs, and was a true reflection of the society at that time.

#### 4.1.2 The Evolution of the Character “犬” in Relation to Hunting and Social Life in Ancient Times

Many Chinese characters from “犬” have a direct or indirect relationship with hunting. For example,

winter hunting is “狩” (oracle bone script: ) , bird by bird is “猎” (jinwen: ) , the proceeds of

hunting is “获” (oracle bone script: ) , and the traces are known by the gas as “臭” (oracle bone

script: ) . “臭”, all these reflect the importance of hunting in ancient society. In addition, some of the

Chinese characters originally from “豸”, indicating fierce beasts, were later changed to “犬”, which is a reflection of the fact that fierce beasts were hunted by people with hunting dogs. For example, the

characters for “狸” (Seal Script: ) and “猫” (Oracle Bone Script: ) are now written as “反犬”.

Characters related to ancient hunting also indirectly reflect the evolution of social life in ancient China. Ancient society has gone through the stages of primitive society, agricultural society and industrial society. In the primitive society, the ancient people were initially in awe of nature, so they created characters to record many things in nature, such as “狼” and “狐”. Immediately after, from the above mentioned “猎”, “获” and other words can be seen that the society has entered the stage of hunting society, people gradually from the oppression of nature to harness the initiative of nature. Later, the ancient society appeared in the ritual of sacrificing to the temple, indicating that the quality of life in ancient society further improved, reflected in the “dog” part of the word on the word “dedication”, the name of the temple dog soup dedication. The name of the temple dog is Jouxian (羹献), and the dog is offered to those who are fat.

The above is a categorized explanation of the basic situation and main contents of the “犬” character in the Shuowen Jiezi, and according to the current statistics, some of the characters in the Shuowen Jiezi are no longer available in the current Modern Chinese Dictionary. Therefore, in teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, we mainly focus on the commonly used characters, but as Chinese teachers, we should have an accurate grasp of the meaning and evolution of the character “犬” from ancient

times to the present day, so as to form the construction of our personal knowledge system, and to select the contents suitable for classroom teaching in order to improve the quality and fullness of the teaching contents. The quality and richness of the teaching content is enhanced.

#### *4.2 Research on the Path of Teaching Chinese Characters to Foreigners, Using the Character “犬” as an Example*

##### *4.2.1 From the Chinese Character Ontology*

##### **1) Enhance the Explanation of Spatial Distribution of Character Roots while Taking into Account the Concept of Stroke Order**

The teaching of Chinese character stroke order plays an important role in the traditional foreign Chinese character teaching classroom. Teachers often teach foreign students to recognize and write Chinese characters correctly by describing the correct stroke order of each character. Chinese learners, especially at the beginning stage, tend to form a so-called correct Chinese character by scribbling, which is not conducive to the progress of Chinese character learning. This is not conducive to progress in learning Chinese characters. Over time, this can lead to problems such as poor writing, slow writing speed, and unattractive writing. In the case of the character “犬”, for example, the “一” should be written first to ensure the balance of the shape of the character, but if foreign students do not pay attention to it and write “丶” or other strokes first, the shape of the character is not very smooth. If foreign students do not pay attention to this and write “丶” or other strokes first, the whole character will not flow smoothly.

Although the teaching of stroke order is one of the basic skills of teaching Chinese characters, it should be emphasized too much to avoid foreign students' rejection of Chinese characters. Li Yunfu (Li, 2014) clearly pointed out that one of the misunderstandings in the teaching of Chinese characters at present is that too much emphasis is placed on the shape and sequence of strokes in writing, so that a lot of time and energy are spent on the teaching of strokes and stroke sequences, with the result that the loss is not worth the gain. Therefore, he advocates that the teaching of Chinese characters to the outside world should not emphasize on strokes and stroke order in terms of form, but should emphasize on the identification of radicals, especially the spatial distribution of the radicals, so as to effectively recognize different radicals and different glyphs combined with the radicals. In this regard, the author holds the same view. On the one hand, we should pay attention to the analysis of root forms, especially those characters that are close to each other and easy to be mixed up. Take the character “犬” for example, international students often confuse it with the character “大”. Although there is a difference in strokes between the two characters, the cognitive value of the two characters is not in the strokes themselves, but in all the strokes of the character “无”. Although there is a difference in strokes between the two characters, their cognitive value is not reflected in the strokes themselves, but in the opposites of the roots of all the characters in the group including “无”. Therefore, what needs to be memorized is not the strokes themselves, but the related roots. On the other hand, the principle of spatial distribution of

character roots should also be emphasized. For foreign students, especially those from non-Chinese-speaking countries, they are influenced by their mother tongue, which is based on the front-to-back arrangement of letters, whereas Chinese characters are “square” characters made up of radicals, which are three-dimensional and rich in shape, and are fundamentally different from the arrangement of letters. Therefore, in teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, students should be taught the concept of “square” Chinese characters, i.e., they should be trained to recognize the basic layout concepts of Chinese characters, such as “top-down structure, left-right structure, top-middle-bottom structure, left-middle-right structure, and full/semi-envelope structure”. Take the character “犬” (dog) in the Classification of Levels as an example, out of the 27 characters, most of them have left-right structures, and very few of them have up-down, left-middle-right, and single-character structures. Therefore, in teaching, it is possible to follow the hierarchy and put the characters with the same root layout into one group for analogical teaching, thus producing twice the result with half the effort.

## 2) Explanation of the Rationale for the Construction of Chinese Characters

The rationale for the construction of Chinese characters mainly refers to the theory of “Six Books”. The theory started from “Han Shu—Art and Culture”, gobbled up in the Spring and Autumn and Warring States period, that is, in the pre-Qin period, the germ, the formation of the “Six Books” in the Han Dynasty, said Liu Xin, carried forward in Xu Shen. Xu Shen’s summary and explanation of the Six Books in *ShuoWenJieZi* laid the foundation for the study of ancient characters to become a discipline, and also promoted the development of the study of Chinese characters in later generations. In fact, there has been a controversy in the academic circle as to whether Chinese language teachers should talk about *ShuoWenJieZi* and the theory of the Six Books in the classroom of teaching Chinese characters to foreigners. In the author’s opinion, regarding this issue, two factors should be taken into consideration: the level of Chinese language learning of foreign students and the content of the lecture. For foreign students, learning Chinese is inherently difficult, and learning Chinese characters is even more difficult. Therefore, at the beginning stage, Chinese teachers should focus on the basic knowledge of Chinese characters mentioned above, and do not need to explain the more complicated theories of line formation, because this is the adaptation period of the students, and the teachers should not over-export the complicated knowledge, which will only increase the pressure of the students to learn Chinese. At the intermediate and advanced stages, after mastering the basic knowledge of Chinese characters, foreign students will be curious about why Chinese characters are written in this way, and then Chinese teachers can combine the contents of the teaching with the content and select the knowledge that is suitable for foreign students and within their comprehension ability to explain. Take the two characters of “犬” and “狗” as an example, they refer to the same kind of animal in terms of generalization, but why there are two completely different ways of writing them is explained by combining them with the theory of the composition of lines. “犬” is a pictogram, and “狗” is a form and ideogram, and it is not

easy to understand the concepts simply by explaining them. Teachers of Chinese can present the ancient Chinese characters of dog and dog through vivid and interesting stories, so as to have the feeling of “reading a picture and knowing a character”, and then compare the ancient Chinese characters with the current Chinese characters, so as to avoid the rigidity of the theoretical knowledge and affect the motivation of the students. The students’ motivation is not affected by the rigidity of the theoretical knowledge. From the character “狗” we can also derive other Chinese characters with anti-dog side, and the combination of time-lapse and co-time-lapse teaching can present the knowledge of Chinese characters to students in a systematic way.

However, the following points should be noted when teaching international students about the theory of Chinese character shapes. Firstly, it is not necessary to start from the theory of “*Six Books*” when explaining the shape of Chinese characters, but it is necessary to explain the theory of “*Six Books*” in conjunction with the shape of Chinese characters. However, the explanation of the theory of “*Six Books*” must be combined with the shape of the Chinese character. The explanation of the relationship between shape and meaning must be reasonable and sensible, not subjective and presumptive. In teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, it is often the case that teachers explain the forms of Chinese characters arbitrarily in order to make it easier for students to memorize them. For example, “照” is explained as a Japanese man holding a knife, killing a person and leaving four drops of blood. Such explanation is essentially very wrong. If it is used as a means to facilitate memorization, it is barely acceptable, but in the long run, it will certainly not be conducive to the learning of Chinese characters, and there is no basis for such explanation. Secondly, while tracing the forms of ancient characters is certainly part of the classroom content, it is important to prioritize them and not to overpower them, turning the original classroom of Chinese characters into a classroom of paleographic knowledge. In other words, it is sufficient for Chinese language teachers to use the theory of composition as one of the means of teaching Chinese characters, and it should not be regarded as the purpose of teaching Chinese characters. It is important to distinguish the objectives of Chinese language courses from those of teaching Chinese as a foreign language in terms of their nature, so as to avoid confusion. Thirdly, one should not be overly obsessed with the theory of formations. The essence of this point is the same as the second one, i.e., to recognize the goal of teaching Chinese characters in the classroom, because the current judgment on the rationale of construction is not only limited to the “*Six Books*” theory, but also to the “*Three Books*” theory etc. Li Yunfu has also expressed the view that this point should be considered as the goal of teaching Chinese characters in the classroom. Li Yunfu (Li, 2012) also states that it is often difficult to determine whether a character belongs to the Six Books of hieroglyphic or indicative, huiyi or xingyi, and that there is no point in affirming it, not to mention the fact that the *Six Books* are not in themselves a Chinese character categorization system.

#### 4.2.2 From a Pedagogical Perspective

##### 1) Promoting Innovative Changes in Teaching Methods

There are various methods used in the traditional teaching of Chinese characters to foreigners, and some of the more famous ones are the association method, the two-way method, and the tied association method. The association method of remembering Chinese characters is advocated by Prof. Zhou Jian of Jinan University, and is reflected in the book “Theories and Methods of Teaching Chinese Characters” edited by him. This method is mainly based on the characteristics and laws of Chinese characters themselves, and uses the cognitive laws and thinking advantages of Chinese learners to mobilize all methods to remember Chinese characters, making the memorization of Chinese characters full of fun. The “two-legged” approach was put forward by Mr. Lv Bisong, who advocated that Chinese characters should not be treated as mere writing symbols, and that the concept of “teaching Chinese characters is also teaching the Chinese language” should be firmly established (Lv, 2006). The “two laws” of teaching Chinese characters refers to the combination of strokes and strokes to create basic structures, and the combination of basic structures and basic structures to create composite structures. The linkage method is one of the main research methods in traditional phonetics, which was later used to express a method of teaching Chinese characters to foreigners. This method is carried out on the basis that learners have certain cognitive ability of Chinese characters, and through the way of linking by resemblance and linking by proximity of sound, it strengthens memorization by increasing the recurrence rate of Chinese characters, and learns the old and learns the new.

In the face of the complexity of the current international situation, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language in China is in urgent need of further development and innovative changes in teaching methods. The most representative change is the integration of science and technology into teaching, whether it is the explanation of stroke order and character root distribution, or the changes of character shapes from ancient times to the present, all of which can be closely integrated with science and technology. Taking the character “犬” as an example, teachers can list the characters with the same root distribution together, classify them according to the content and the criteria of “Classification”, and combine them with multimedia technology to present the dynamic video of writing Chinese characters, such as putting the characters of “反犬旁” together, and at the same time, they can also show the evolution of the Chinese character’s form in an animated way. The process is animated and combined with the practice of calligraphy etc., to make the teaching of Chinese characters more efficient.

##### 2) Transformation of Teaching Subjects

In teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, students should be regarded as the main body of the classroom, and the teacher-led “knowledge instilling” classroom should be changed into a “student-initiated” classroom, and students’ initiative in learning Chinese characters should be improved by assigning pre-course tasks, group cooperation and sharing etc., so as to Realize the “teacher-student” dual-led classroom teaching model. Take the popular “flipped classroom” teaching

mode as an example, which is based on the theory of constructivism, attaches importance to the personalized differences in students' cognitive process, and emphasizes student-centeredness, believing that the students are the active constructors of knowledge, and that the teacher is the guide in the process of constructing knowledge for the students. Taking the teaching of the character “犬” as an example, in the pre-course learning stage, the teacher guides the students to complete the preliminary understanding of the shape, sound and meaning of the character “犬” through micro-video and other means, and provides feedback on the results of the pre-course study in the form of small assignments. On this basis, the teacher will focus on teacher-student and student-student interactions in the classroom, for example, based on the pre-course study, the teacher will carry out group competitions such as identifying the glyphs of the character “犬”, supplementing the strokes, and linking up the glyphs and sounds of the characters in the classroom, so as to promote students' motivation to learn and enable them to grasp the knowledge of the Chinese characters more quickly and thoroughly in the large amount of knowledge reproduction. Of course, there are drawbacks in any teaching mode, for example, the hidden danger of the “flipped classroom” teaching mode is whether the learners are serious in their pre-course study, and if they have poor self-management ability, it will have a negative impact on the classroom teaching.

## 5. Concluding

How can the teaching of Chinese characters to foreigners get out of the dilemma? The fundamental way out is to establish a new system of teaching Chinese as a foreign language that is full of Chinese characters and teaches Chinese according to the laws of Chinese characters and Chinese character teaching. This paper analyzes the goal and mission of teaching Chinese characters to foreigners and the development path of teaching Chinese characters to foreigners in the light of the basic situation of the character “犬”, which is the subject of the current research on teaching Chinese characters to foreigners in core journals. In conclusion, the research on teaching Chinese characters to foreigners has a long way to go, and there are still a lot of contents that need to be studied urgently, so I hope that this paper can provide a little inspiration for the research on teaching Chinese characters to foreigners.

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