

Teaching Chinese to foreign students: Exploring teaching practice and effects on oral proficiency

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Abstract

Oral Chinese class for international students is an important platform to cultivate learners' language and comprehensive quality, and provides a rich language learning and practice environment for international students. In order to better cultivate international students' comprehensive language application ability, this paper, guided by constructivism theory, explores and practices the reform of oral Chinese classroom teaching.

Keywords— *Oral Chinese class, international students, language learning, comprehensive quality, constructivism theory*

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning a language is not easy, especially if it is a foreign one that has different constructions than the mother tongue. Besides English, the foreign language that attracts the world's attention most is Chinese. This is because China plays an important role in world economics, so learning Chinese can make it easier to expand the economic networks. However, Chinese is not an easy language, because it has unique writing system based on characters and tones. In addition, individuals who learn Chinese must understand some factors that can hamper their success in learning the language, so that it can be anticipated quickly and accurately.

Among other learners, a huge number of foreign students, who enters China for higher education, has to learn Chinese. Chinese is a mandatory course during their higher degree education. The studies have noted learning a foreign language is anxiety, which is an effective variable and negatively influences one's success in learning a foreign language (Liu & Huang, 2011). Many researchers have found that one-third of foreign language learners experience at least a moderate level of anxiety during learning (Horwitz, 2001). Though foreign language anxiety is a universal

phenomenon, however, it is also imperative to extend research and explore teacher's practices in the classroom which effects foreign student's oral proficiency.

Problem Statement

Along with the popularity of Chinese culture, interest in learning the Chinese language has boomed. Chinese is increasingly important worldwide due to China's ever-rising economic status. The number of foreigners who flock to China to learn Chinese is increasing. The boom in Chinese language learning is unlikely to be a temporary fad. Instead, it is emerging as a promising area matter. With the rapid economic globalization and the rise of the internationalization level of Chinese higher education more and more international students choose to study in China. Foreign students' education has been a very important part in China's higher education system. Foreign students who learn Chinese as a second language (CSL) may not adopt Chinese dialects and face problems regarding oral proficiency.

Likewise, CSL teachers may not come to understand foreign students native language and their identity, values, attitudes and beliefs as teachers (Gao, 2012). Therefore, in terms of teaching CSL to foreign students,

establishing an identity as a teaching professional is perplexing in nature. This study explores how CSL lecturers adopt teaching practices, develop desired memberships in the community involving foreign students learning CSL, as well as how their commitment to teaching practices and innovative pedagogies lead to improve oral proficiency of students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language teaching is a process more than making foreigners understand the language, however, it is a challenging task to improve the language proficiency of students. In this regard, the language teachers adopt a new personality to adjust themselves with the foreign students and involve in their community (Shayshon & Popper-Giveon, 2016). During their teaching lives, teachers interact with students of diverse background in educational institutions (Xu, 2012) and in classrooms try to involve each student equally. As teachers are often informed by their experiences, imagination allows them to follow some strategies to engage in class activities, in particular, to work on language proficiency of foreign students. In this struggle, some teachers, although they may have some experience, may be still grappling with how to accomplish their pre-determined goals as a teacher (Agee, 2006). Hence, the successful transformation is significant to teachers, for which their professional identity needs to be secured, strengthened and altered, specifically for language class.

Within that scholarship, there is a need to explore the commitment that teachers are willing to make to their teaching and how they perceive teacher-learner interaction to work on foreign students' language (Teng, 2017). One teaching practice is making a classroom a community with identity and adopt personality for that specific community of foreigners, this leads to sense-making teaching practices (Reeves, 2009).

In this backdrop, teaching is a process of social engagement wherein the teacher is an active agent in the practices of social communities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) and connected to larger sociocultural group (Benson, 2016). Many teachers experience a "reality shock" during teaching language (Farrell, 2012), although novice teachers find the knowledge they have received in preparation courses useful, they still experience a gap between their expectations of teaching and the reality of teaching language. This

challenging situation for many novice teachers may cause them to constantly cast and recast their teaching practices and innovate teaching strategies (Izadinia, 2014). However, other research findings show that teachers, through exercising their self-agency (i.e., the individual's subjective awareness and capacity to initiate and execute actions in seeking possible changes within their contextual constraints), can cope with the potential obstacles and turn the challenges into a driving force (Dinkelman, 2011). Teachers are subjected to a wide range of internal factors (e.g., their previous work experience and self-agency) and external factors (e.g., institutional demands and supportive networks), that can shape and reshape their professional experience as a teacher (Flores & Day, 2006).

Along with the massification of higher education, changes have been witnessed. These include reduced funding resources, new kinds of students, organizational change, and institutional stratification (Abbas & McLean, 2001). Within this context, the proliferation of teaching national language to foreign students increased teaching workload. However, in this situation, the role of language teachers and teaching practices need transformation and constant evaluation. Therefore, the proposed research in Chinese context aims to understand the experience of language teachers in China, who are teaching Chinese language to foreign students in China.

Purpose of the Study

The proposed research, therefore, by adopting a qualitative method, intends to interview with Chinese language teachers at higher educational institutions and understand their teaching practices, which affect student's oral proficiency.

Research Questions:

The exploratory study will find answers to following research questions:

- What is the experience of language teachers for teaching Chinese language to foreign students in Universities?
- What challenges language teachers face while teaching Chinese language to foreign students in universities?
- What are innovative pedagogical practices they adopt in teaching Chinese language to diverse groups of foreign students in universities?

- What are the teaching strategies and classroom activities are followed to improve oral proficiency of foreign students?

III. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Participants Recruitment

The Chinese language teachers in Public universities of China will be selected who meet the inclusion criterion. The criterion includes teaching Chinese language to foreign students only for last ten years.

Sampling

Sampling is the act, process or technique of selecting a suitable sample or representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (Wilumila, 2002). The sampling method used in this study will be purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling method where a particular settings, individuals or events are selected intentionally in order to provide essential information that cannot be acquired by other ways (Taherdoost, 2016).

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured will be conducted with the selected participants of the study.

Informed Consent Form

An informed consent letter will be signed first by the participants before interview.

Ethical consideration

There are no known personal risks to any person taking part in the research. There are no physical or non-physical risks to participants including social, psychological, financial or reputational risks. If the discussion includes sensitive issues and participants feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics, they can avoid it. They do not have to provide any reason for not responding to a question, or for refusing to take part in the research study. Information on the findings of the study will be provided to participants to keep them informed about the results. The confidentiality of participants will be maintained, and their names will not be revealed in any manner. Each participant will be assigned a number so that she\he is only referred by number and not real name.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data is not in numbers, but it is based on oral and verbal recording and transcribed interviews.

Usually qualitative data analysis is based on interpretative philosophy, meaningful and symbolic content of the recorded data is examined. As the proposed qualitative study recorded data will be grouped according to research questions and then differences and similarities will be identified. Coding of similarities and differences will be done, and emergent themes will be identified. For qualitative data analysis NVIVO software will be use.

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