

MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE AND TEACHING CHINESE AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *With the development of science and technology, we have entered a new information era. People have transitioned from the era of reading and writing to the era of network and media. In order to adapt to the teaching environment and teaching requirements that keep pace with the times, various disciplines should also make corresponding changes and adjustments. At this time, multimodal discourse analysis theory comes into sight. This paper will discuss the relevant concepts of multimodal theory and how it can be exploited in teaching Chinese as a foreign language.*

Keywords: *multimodal discourse analysis, multimodal teaching, teaching Chinese as a foreign language.*

Introduction

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language is the teaching of Chinese as a second language or foreign language to foreign students, including the teaching of Chinese culture. Its fundamental goal is to cultivate foreign students' Chinese communicative competence. The traditional way that the teacher explains the culture knowledge by using Chinese or English as the language of instruction has its limits. How can Chinese teachers help foreign students comprehend Chinese language and Chinese culture and enhance their sense of integration into the Chinese cultural context? As it is known to all, language is the tool of communication. However, human languages are always accompanied by many nonverbal forms of communication. In the process of communication, various senses such as vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste are all activated to achieve successful communication. From the perspective of multimodal discourse analysis theory, this paper will discuss the importance of multimodal discourse in Chinese teaching as a second language.

The Concept of Multimodal Discourse

The theory of multimodal discourse in teaching was highlighted in the 1990s. It draws lessons from the meta function theory, from the theory of systemic functional linguistics. Kress (2010) states that, “using three modes in one sign - writing and image and color as well - has real benefits. Each mode does a specific thing: image shows what takes too long to read, and writing names what would be difficult to show. Color is used to highlight specific aspects of the overall message”. It holds that nonverbal symbols such as images, sounds, animations and colors can convey certain meanings as language. Li Zhanzi (2003) is the first scholar who introduced multimodal theory into China, and many scholars have conducted in-depth research on multimodal discourse analysis theory. Zhang Delu (2009) pointed out that multimodal discourse is a phenomenon of communication using vision, listening, touch and other senses, with the help of language, sound, image, action and other means, symbols and resources.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

In recent years, multimodal discourse analysis theory has been widely used in various studies, and multimodal teaching Chinese as a foreign language is one of them. Wang Zulei (2016) divided the discourse modes of American Chinese immersion classes into four categories: vision, listening, touch and space. Among them, the visual mode is divided into text, body language, image, video and ideographic symbols; auditory modes are divided into vocal language, music, other sound effects and rhythm; tactile modes are divided into limb sensing, human contact and environmental contact; Spatial modes are divided into static and dynamic.

The use of these modes is mainly aimed at teaching Chinese to children. Specific, vivid and perceptual visual modes are more conducive to children’s cognition and understanding. Among them, ideographic symbols in visual mode refer to symbols that are not pictures and are given new meaning by teachers in class, such as using geometric teaching aids to represent apples, butterflies and so on. The rhythm in the auditory mode is based on the strong mechanical memory of children, which is expressed in the form of children’s songs or poetry reading. The limb response in tactile mode is based on the strong imitation ability of children, which is reflected in the learning process. Children often imitate the limb movements of teachers or videos. Whispering, clapping games, role performances can help students comprehend the meaning of conveyed messages.

On the premise of understanding what multimodality is, we can summarize multimodal teaching as a teaching method, that is, teachers flexibly applying a variety of symbolic resources and methods, fully mobilizing students’ multiple sensory modes to obtain and receive knowledge and helping students construct meanings. Multimodal teaching requires teachers to introduce a variety of teaching means and methods to interact with learners, and strive to change the teaching mode dominated by language mode in traditional teaching. At the same time, the transformation of mode can enhance the internalization and absorption of knowledge.

However, a multimodal combination does not mean the more modes the better. Teachers should consider the optimization principle. In the study of multimodal foreign language classroom teaching design, Zhang Delu (2010) proposed the principle of the best effect, including the principle of effectiveness, the principle of adaptation and the principle of economy. The ultimate goal of multimodal combination selection is to give full play to the advantages of multimodal combination and improve the quality of Chinese teaching as a

foreign language. Generally speaking, teachers choose a certain mode based on the following three considerations: firstly, whether they can fill the vacancy in a sense; secondly, whether it can play a strengthening role; thirdly, whether it can attract the attention of students. In this way, multimodal combinations can have a greater teaching effect.

The significance of Multimodal Discourse in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

In the classroom of Chinese as a foreign language, the traditional teaching modes cannot fully meet the learners' needs. With the continuous development of science and information technology, multimodal teaching meets the needs of current teaching and is gradually becoming a new teaching concept. The traditional teaching mode is basically teachers' teaching and students' learning. In the long run, teaching and learning have become a one-way input and output, which means that teachers only blankly teach knowledge to learners, and learners only mechanically accept it. Whether they have mastered the knowledge is not the most important.

➤ *Enriching the classroom teaching forms of Chinese as a foreign language*

The new teaching models can meet the development requirements of teaching Chinese as a foreign language in this new era. Making full use of modern multimedia technology and modern educational technology, combining texts, pictures, videos, audios, gestures and other dynamic and static modes, and applying them to teaching Chinese as a foreign language, can create a real language learning environment and situation, so that learners can perceive and understand Chinese with multiple senses. Undoubtedly, the new teaching mode of Chinese as a foreign language attracts teachers' interest and learners' enthusiasm, and provides the best effect in teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

➤ *Stimulating teaching potential and create a good learning atmosphere*

Different from other teaching theories, multimodal teaching has no fixed mode. Teachers can flexibly and easily operate the teaching modes. They can accurately analyze the teaching environment and students according to their own conditions. They can teach students according to their aptitude, adjust the choice of multimodal teaching according to the characteristics of different foreign students' regions, ages, personalities, religions and cultures, design different teaching plans and make different courseware. For example, in the Chinese listening and speaking class, it is appropriate to choose the video or audio mode of scene simulation communication, which is more suited to the situation. In reading and writing courses, it is more appropriate to choose the mode of static resources based on text and pictures, which enable students to see more vividly the formation of Chinese words and their cognitive meaning. In culture-based lessons, the teacher can take advantage of multimedia to present visual modes, such as texts, images and videos and auditory modes such as music and other physical props and tools. The open network environment creates an interactive teaching environment with sound, light, color and pictures. This colourful open classroom can maximize the teaching potential of teachers and the enthusiasm of students, so as to create a pleasurable, independent and harmonious learning atmosphere.

➤ *Suitable for different age groups and various types of courses*

As the teaching subjects come from different educational backgrounds and have different ages, their ability to acquire and master language knowledge differing from one another (the younger teaching subjects especially having limited ability), teachers are required to choose appropriate teaching modes or ideas in the real teaching practice. Multimodal discourse uses the ideographic system formed by music, body and space, which is conducive to children and adolescents being more efficient in the learning process; this is also an effective way for them to develop multiple intelligence. Therefore, strengthening the application of multimodal discourse in Chinese teaching is conducive to the coordinated development of students' multiple intelligence.

In addition, multimodal teaching implies that teachers use certain ways to stimulate listening, vision, touch and other senses so as to stimulate learners' interest and efficiency in learning Chinese. In teaching Chinese as a foreign language teachers can choose appropriate modes according to different class types and organically combine them. For instance, in the listening class, teachers can combine auditory modes and visual modes, and use audio, video and other elements to improve learners' learning efficiency. In the speaking class, teachers can use listening, vision, touch and other modes to create an appropriate context and organize learners to carry out role-playing, draw-and-guess, say-and-guess, imitation show of sound and action and other activities, so as to enable them to master the corresponding knowledge objectives in a relaxed environment.

Conclusion

Multimodal teaching meets the requirements of teaching Chinese as a foreign language in the new era and will play a more and more significant role. Since the teaching beneficiaries are foreign students, in order to enable students to better understand the illustrative language, teachers will attach a large number of body language forms such as gestures, actions and expressions, which belong to the visual mode. The use of visual modes such as words, symbols, pictures, images and videos, as well as the tactile mode of character contact, should participate in the expression of the theme meaning of classroom teaching.

This paper shows that multimodal classroom teaching design of Chinese as a foreign language can promote foreign students' cognitive understanding of Chinese language and culture, improve their interest in learning, and increase students' sense of integration into the context of Chinese culture. From the perspective of linguistics and language teaching, multimodal discourse analysis theory provides a new research perspective on how to tell Chinese stories and spread Chinese culture in Chinese classes. However, the design of these multimodal combinations follows the effectiveness principle, the adaptation principle as well as the economic one. In a sense, they can complement each other, and play a strengthening role in teaching. They can attract students' attention and help students understand the connotation of Chinese culture. According to the characteristics of the age and educational background of the teaching object, combining the specific content of Chinese language and culture teaching with the multimodal teaching mode to explore the best effect of different modal combination will be a direction for future research.

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