

Some problems of Chinese teachers existing in TCSL class and their solutions

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Abstract: Chinese teachers, students and teaching materials all take important positions in the class of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language (TCSL). Students play the main role in TCSL class, Chinese teachers play the leading role, while teaching materials are the assisting tools. The teaching abilities of Chinese teacher whom the students learn from and communicate with have direct impact on students' learning effect. This paper intends to analyze the existing problems of Chinese teachers in TCSL class and proposes some solutions to help Chinese teachers improve their practical abilities in TCSL class for the development of the career of TCSL.

1. Introduction

With the development of economic globalization, Chinese comprehensive national strength is enhancing constantly, and its international status rises rapidly. There is a surge in Chinese learning, more and more countries and districts started to pay attention to Chinese learning, some even regard Chinese as a compulsory course. The career of TCSL is in its real great times. Meanwhile, it welcomes the chance and development, and faces great challenges, one of which comes from the quality of Chinese teachers to be improved. In the process of TCSL, Chinese teacher is the one whom students most frequently get in touch with. They also gain Chinese knowledge from Chinese teachers. But teaching is a two-way process. Chinese teachers from China are often lack of the consciousness of self-improvement [1]. There are also some problems regarding the teaching abilities of TCSL, which need to be faced and solved.

2. Some problems existing among Chinese teachers in TCSL class.

The teaching abilities of Chinese teachers include the cognitive ability of Chinese teaching, the ability of designing Chinese teaching, the ability of implementing Chinese teaching, the ability of managing Chinese teaching and the ability of assessing Chinese education. These five abilities can be further divided into 34 specific teaching skills.[2] The cognitive ability of Chinese teaching is the basis among all the teaching abilities of Chinese teachers, while the ability of implementing Chinese teaching is the center, and the other three abilities are the important parts of the teaching abilities of Chinese teachers.

2.1. The inadequate cognitive ability of Chinese teachers in teaching.

The cognitive ability of teaching is involved in mastering the basic information of learners, recognize the main body of teaching, teaching outline and teaching content, and getting familiar with the teaching environment.[2] These four aspects are often referred to the "four preparations" when teachers are preparing the class, which means preparing students, preparing teachers themselves, preparing teaching materials and preparing courses. Preparing students means teachers should have a pre-understanding for students' basic informations, including their general classification, such as age, gender and so on, and their mental mechanism, such as national psychology, cultural psychology, personality psychology etc. Teachers should have a specific knowledge on students' nationality, learning motivation, learning attitude and learning level etc. Preparing themselves is to check whether they have fully understood what will be taught, what the key points are, what the difficult points are, how to arrange the teaching procedures, how to convey

well the content of materials that were already mastered by students. Preparing environment refers to a pre-understanding for the teaching environment, such as the grade distribution of the school, the size of the classroom, multimedia devices, light condition, sound insulation, the arrangement of desks and chairs in classrooms. Chinese teachers often distinguish between frontal apical sound with post apical sound, and confuse themselves with orders of strokes. These cases give a false demonstration for students, which shows the Chinese teachers' ontological knowledge is weak, and they do not prepare well before class by combining teaching materials. Under other circumstances, some Chinese teachers can't answer the questions which are raised by students suddenly. Instead, they use the sentences like "this is what Chinese people are normally used to say" to respond to students, which also reflects that the teachers do not prepare well for the course, and do not predict the questions students may raise and prepare answers. Besides, many teachers found the format of their PPT was not in accordance with that in the classroom. Thus, the character became smaller, the orders of pinyin were wrong, and they had to take advantage of the precious time in class to adjust the format of their PPT. On other conditions, teachers had prepared a PPT before class, but when they came to the classroom, they found no multimedia devices at all. So they have to adjust the courses temporarily. All of these conditions results from a lack of familiarity with the teaching environment in advance.

2.2. The inadequate ability of implementing teaching of Chinese teachers

There is a rather high demand for the ability of implementing Chinese teaching, which includes controlling the speed of teaching, explaining the teaching content, consolidating what have learned, applying body languages, designing blackboard writing and drawing, initiating learning motivation, using classroom language. A complete Chinese class includes leading-in, explaining new words and exercise, analysis the text, class exercises, review and conclusion, consolidation after class and so on. Each procedure can further be divided into certain specific steps[3]. Each procedure has different key points, and occupies different class time, which requires teachers to control the speech of teaching. Chinese teachers should neither be too fast, nor cover too many knowledge points, because students can't catch with you or they will get bored with the class. Meanwhile, they shouldn't be too slow, and cover only a few knowledge points. They shouldn't pose only one expression for the whole class either, which may lead to a prolonged speed of teaching, and a lifeless class. Thus, students will have no motivation and interest to continue listening to the teachers. When explaining something, teachers must present simple content which is easy for students to understand. In other words, using the phrases that students have learned and simple interlanguage to explain the new words and language point. It is tabooed to complicate something that is simple. For example, when teaching the new word "银行", teachers only need to display the picture or using English to explain "银行" is bank, which is enough for students to understand its meaning. It seems unreasonable to tell them that "银行是存钱取钱的地方"(bank is the place where you save money and withdraw money), because they are strange to the successive three new words, "存钱"(save money), "取钱"(withdraw money), "地方"(place). Generally speaking, using more complicated phrases to explain new words is less efficient than directly presenting pictures. As for the application of body languages, teachers should avoid some inelegant actions, such as pulling one tail of clothes, compressing lips, flipping hair. A series of movement like those may make students feel their teachers are shy and unconfident. When the class is beginning, teachers should pay attention to the volume of courses which should be controlled, and arranged in order, combined with exercises. But some teachers are used to teaching new words before teaching text, and they spend a class (40 minutes) to explain nearly 20 new words in a text. There was no exercise for students but all explanations of teachers. Students were forced to memorize 20 new words within 40 minutes, which is not only a great burden for them, but also leads to an outcome with no effect.

2.3. Chinese teachers' ability of other aspects waiting to be improved

From the perspective of the ability of designing Chinese teaching, teachers can't balance well

between the key and difficult points. They often equate key points with difficult points, which shows that they haven't mastered the content of the teaching materials. When dealing with the teaching procedures and designing the class activities, teachers can't specify the purpose of each activity, whether it conforms to students' condition and whether it can help reach the teaching objective. Therefore, they have wasted lots of time in doing many invalid arrangements.

From the perspective of the ability of managing Chinese class, teachers can cope with the conditions successively where students play mobile phone, sleep, talk or chat with others. On the management of class time, teachers haven't made full use of every minute in class. Some activities like delivering hang-out, adjusting the format of ppt (mentioned before), which should be done before class, occupy the precious time in class. On the management of the space of classrooms, they haven't made appropriate arrangement either. For example, if students' seats change every time, when the teacher is conducting conversation practice in pair, one student may be left, so the teacher has to spare some time to arrange this student.

2.4. The negative attitude of Chinese teachers.

There is a set of fixed steps for conducting TCSL, and the course content is simple. Thus, many teachers think that there is no need to spend a amount of time on preparation. This results in the inappropriate proportion between the time for preparing class and the difficulty of teaching. The low quality of preparation leads to a class with simple course pattern, less course structure, and dull learning atmosphere. Teachers are neither willing to have a teaching training and run through the teaching procedures before class, while some teachers or students can comment or suggest on the class, nor willing to spend more time on observing the class conducted by other teachers and drawing lessons from it. They are not willing to spend time on collecting relevant materials, watching related videos. What's more, Chinese teachers rely too much on the multimedia. Under some circumstances, there is a class without any blackboard writing. The disadvantage of overusing multimedia is that the content on PPT flashes away quickly, leaving shallow impressions on students' mind. They don't even know where the key points are, thus have low return after class.

3. The solutions for the existing problems of Chinese teachers in TCSL

3.1. Chinese teachers should promote their cognitive ability of teaching

As for preparing students, Chinese teachers should get familiar with the basic information of students, understand their principle position in teaching. Chinese teachers should know the age, nationality, cognitive styles, personality features, learning motivations of their students, which are good for teaching students in accordance to their aptitude, conducting targeted teaching, and improving teaching efficiency. Besides, teachers should find the potential of their students and the learning methods that are suitable for them with constant adjustment after they have learned for certain amount of time. As for preparing themselves, teachers should have a proper position for their roles. Teachers are the communicator of Chinese knowledge, so they should have good and solid Chinese basic knowledge, and answer students' questions in a steady way. Teachers are the subjects whom students communicate with, and students will imitate their teachers unconsciously. Therefore, there is a high demand for teachers' mandarin level and grammar structures. "Teachers are also the communicator, image and window and mirror of Chinese culture"[4]. Culture should be embodied in the Chinese class, so that students can unconsciously get to know Chinese culture. As for preparing teaching materials, teachers need to spend large amount of time and energy on the analysis and rearrangement of the teaching materials to make it suitable for teachers to teach, and for students to learn. Regarding to the key points and difficult points of the course, teachers should have their own opinion, and can predict the questions student may put forward, and prepare the answers in advance. After all, the questions in class can be diversified, and teachers are not sages. If they can't answer the question, they must let students know that they don't know either. It is not advised for teachers to response by fooling students. Instead they should find the answer in time after class, and tell students the answer in next class. In this way teachers can also learn from

teaching, and improve themselves in teaching. As for preparing the environment, teachers can get familiar with the basic information of the school by internet, or consult the teachers in that school. Teachers can also go to the school in advance and get familiar with the classroom where they are going to have a class. They can decorate the classroom by hanging up some Chinese knot, or putting up some Chinese characters, to make the classroom full of colors of Chinese culture. They can arrange the seats, and make the seats distribution suitable for the class activities they designed. It is better for them to arrive at the classroom 10 minutes earlier, so that they can be familiar with the multimedia devices.

3.2 Chinese teachers should promote their ability of implementing teaching.

When implementing teaching, teachers should control the speed of teaching. A good class should be conducted in order, integrated with both motion and quietness. Professional terms should not be shown in class, such as interrogative pronoun, affirmative sentences. Teachers should replace the explanation of terms with the methods of concluding and making examples, and theories full of the class, but pure theories are never really shown on the class. The capacity of a class should conform to the cognitive level and age condition of students. When explaining the content, teachers should use clear, specific speech, which means they should have enough volume, proper speed, fluctuated intonation, accurate phonic and correct grammar, and they should adopt simple and common phrases. As for the classroom language, teachers should choose words that can draw close distance between teachers and students as frequent as possible. For example, they should replace “同学们,请你们看黑板”, by “同学们,我们一起看黑板,好吗? ”, and they should replace “你们” by “我们”. If we use interrogative sentence instead of imperative sentence, the class can make students feel intimate and respected. Teachers should make full use of body languages, and combine relevant cultural knowledge. For example, clenching the fist with one thumb up means praise, but in America, it means taking a ride. Teachers can have eye contact with students in class, and cast expecting eyes to them. In China this means an expectation of response, or an expectation of a reply for the questions the teacher raised. What Chinese teachers need to pay attention to is the proper use of body languages with good manners. Chinese teachers started with the motivation of students, as foreign students would like to be praised or get applaud. The motivation of students is mainly composed of affiliated drive, and students are eager to show themselves. Therefore, teachers should praise them generously, and give warm applause to the speakers in class with the rest of the students. In this way, not only it can live up the vitality of the class, but also initiate students' learning enthusiasm. Teaching new content should be combined with class exercises. After explaining a language point, repetitive targeted exercises should be connected at once. With the combination of teaching and exercise, students should be as the center, and the proportion of the time teachers teach and students practice is 3 to 7. With last few minutes left for students to digest and give feedbacks, the effect of such a class can be much better than that teachers purely teach and students only listen.

3.3. Chinese teachers should improve their abilities of teaching in other aspects

When making teaching objectives, teachers should specify what to teach, how to teach, and have a general direction in their mind, then make a complete teaching plan based on the students' level and their learning degree. Teachers should grasp the key points and difficult points for teaching, so that they can simplify complicated questions. Teachers should bear the key points and difficult points in mind, combine several teaching methods to conduct teaching and practice, and reach the best effect of teaching. Chinese teachers should not rely on teaching materials completely, because teaching materials are only the tools assisting teaching. Chinese teachers should have the concept that “teaching materials are used instead of taught ”[5]. Teachers can revise the teaching materials or even compile them according to the practical condition. Teachers bring relevant things that are closely related to life into teaching materials, teach students typical scenarios, and use the teaching materials creatively. The design of course activities should keep several principles.

- 1) Reality principle and the principle of selecting the best. Beginning from reality, the

conduction of course activities should fit with the teaching objectives and teaching content, with the cognitive level, receptive level, and learning motivation of students. Designing the best course activities guarantee the good effect of class, and help to reach the teaching objectives with aim and target. Before conducting the course activities, teachers should go through repetitive practice, serious analysis, and proper deleting and adding to reach the best class effect. [6]

2) The principle of diversification. When designing courses, teachers should adopt diversified forms of activities and ways based on the difference of types and cognitive styles of students, and avoid single form and dull course to ensure the quality of activities, students' initiative and the vitality of class.

3) The principle of flexible interaction and easy operation. The main purpose for designing courses is to mobilize students' active participation in class, and develop their initiative to reach good learning effect. The activities should involve all the students. If the activity is too complicated, difficult to operate, short of interest and flexibility, most students will not join in, because the activity is so difficult that students loss their learning interest and confidence. Under this circumstance, the design of course is meaningless. Therefore, teachers should combine interest and operability, and realize the functions of activities.

3.4. Guide teachers to form positive attitude on the career of TCSL.

False cognition and attitude toward career are the reasons why teachers negatively treat the courses. Chinese teachers should have good professional ethics, high sense of responsibility. They should always keep a good mood, cope with the problems in class with positive mind, and smile to students. They should eliminate some negative thinkings, such as "I am Chinese; teaching international students Chinese is simple", "Class time only lasts for 45 minutes; there is no need to prepare the class". They should give self-suggestion on themselves positively with ideas like "I am a glorious TCSL teachers; I am the communicator of Chinese culture", "no matter how long the class lasts; I need to prepare well and do my best". Meanwhile, teachers should love their career and students, and want to be friends with them, then, be good at communicating. They should be aware of knowing students from communicating, practicing personal attractiveness. At last, teachers should consult others modestly, and seek for experience from teachers who are more excellent with more experience. They should listen more, learn more, and get more training. More training means strengthening practicing. Teachers can set teaching scenes for their own to train their teaching abilities. For example, they can face the mirror, the empty classroom, or anywhere which can reach the effect of practice. And they should record the whole process of practice with mobile phone, during which teachers should also record the time, and strictly follow the steps and arrangement on teaching plan. In this way, they can have a grasp of the situation in class. Teachers also need to reflect and conclude frequently, and find their own shortcoming from the film recorded by themselves, and try to improve it.

4. Summary

The career of TCSL is an arduous and long process, where challenges for teachers are countless. As a teacher of TCSL, there are many parts that need to be improved and promoted, many difficulties need to be overcome. However, as long as each teacher of TCSL can specify the responsibility they are bearing to do their own job well, and have a heart with reverence for the career of TCSL, it will become better and better.

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