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The Application of TPR in Chinese Teaching in American Primary and Secondary schools

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Abstract:

The Chinese Language and Culture Program of the University of Kentucky is a part of the World Language Learning Program for primary and secondary schools in Kentucky. This paper studied the articles written by the government-appointed teachers of the Chinese teaching center affiliated to Confucius Institute at the University of Kentucky and watched and analyzed the links of the teacher training videos of Confucius Institute at the University of Kentucky. This paper examines and evaluates the application of the TPR teaching method in the context of the American 5C standards, focusing on various dimensions such as teaching strategies, methodological implementation, selection of learning tools, and classroom management. It derives five key insights and recommendations for future international Chinese education: cultivate systematic thinking in international Chinese learning, spread Chinese culture in innovative ways, cultivate and stimulate learners' learning strategies, establish multidisciplinary integration, and multimedia science assisted teaching.

Key words:

Confucius Institute at the University of Kentucky, TPR teaching method, International Chinese Education

1.Research background

Since the 1980s, the pedagogical approaches in Chinese international education have evolved from traditional methods such as translation, listening and speaking, direct instruction, and reading-based techniques to a more diversified and dynamic range of methodologies. These now commonly include communicative language teaching, task-based learning, cognitive strategies, and total physical response. Concurrently due to the differences in teaching objects, teaching objectives, lesson types, teaching contents, teaching difficulties and other factors, the emphasis of different teaching methods in practical application is also different, teachers can choose one or more teaching methods to teach, in order to achieve the expected teaching effects and objectives.

For the Chinese teaching in the United States, except for the teaching of Chinese majors in universities,

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most of the teaching objects are learners with zero or elementary Chinese level. In the five aspects of language learning, listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, Chinese teaching in the United States seems to pay more attention to the two skills of listening and speaking. It can be found in the practice of University of Kentucky that its teaching and activity goals always meet the needs of American social development in the 21st century. Aiming at cultivating talents of Critical Thinking, Collaborative & Communicative and Creative spirit, This emphasizes the function of language communication and the ability of learners to use language to complete common communicative tasks in daily life. In addition, American Chinese learners, especially middle school and primary school students, are used to the relatively free and loose teaching environment from kindergarten, and are not interested in the traditional teacher-oriented teaching methods, so the teaching effect can not reach the expected goal. Therefore, Chinese teachers in the United States are required to choose appropriate teaching methods, design reasonable classroom activities, and complete corresponding teaching tasks and objectives on the premise of meeting American foreign language teaching standards, in order to achieve ideal teaching effects.

Zhao Yaqian and Wu Chengnian believe that although foreign language teaching in the United States started late, it has a great influence on foreign language teaching in the world. [1] In recent years, the reform of foreign language teaching in the United States has been on a large scale, providing a reference for foreign language teaching in the world. Therefore, through the study of TPR teaching method, this study provides a reference for Chinese teachers in the University of Kentucky to realize this standard in their teaching practice.

2.TPR teaching method and curriculum application at Kentucky University

In the compilation of teaching practices at the Confucius Institute of Kentucky University, numerous educators highlighted the application of the Total Physical Response (TPR) method in Chinese language instruction. This section provides a concise overview of the TPR teaching approach. Developed by psychologist James Asher from San Jose State University in California during the 1970s, TPR is an instructional methodology that underscores the interactive nature of language acquisition and advocates for diverse forms of language input. [2] This theory requires teachers to design the teaching content into a series of command language items, and make students understand the language content by responding to these command items with their bodies.

With the establishment and gradual implementation of the Total Physical Response (TPR) teaching method in foreign language instruction, significant pedagogical efficacy has been achieved. Subsequently, Spanish educator Blaine Ray integrated James Asher's TPR theory with Stephen Krashen's linguistic hypotheses to enhance and refine the approach, leading to the development of Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS). In the early 21st century, the TPR teaching method gained widespread recognition and adoption across various countries, becoming a prevalent tool in foreign language education.

In fact, children can learn a foreign language in a relaxed and pleasant environment through body movements, just like the process of learning their mother tongue. Teacher Jiang Ruihai also mentioned that Xiu Huajing taught how to use the whole body reaction method in the pre-job training when he first came to the

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United States. Call this approach the right brain teaching strategy. Total Physical Response teaching method has gained a high reputation around the world, and many language teachers regard it as a very effective teaching strategy. TPR pedagogy emphasizes the subject position of learners in teaching activities and promotes language understanding and learning through learners' whole-body responses to language instructions. [3]

There are four teaching modes commonly used in TPR teaching: game teaching, visual teaching, performance teaching and situational teaching. Game teaching means that teachers design game activities, and learners master and learn language by participating in games. Game forms are mostly associated with physical activities. For example, when the New Year's Day holiday is coming, Mr. Jiang Ruihai from Confucius Institute at the University of Kentucky will teach the students to sing "Happy New Year". When singing "Happy New Year, Happy New Year", teacher Jiang put his hands on his chest to make a bow and shake from side to side. When "We sing" is sung, Teacher Jiang puts her hands in front of her mouth to make a trumpet shape to indicate singing. When the song "We dance" was sung, Miss Jiang gave the students a dance. Jiang used to be a high school English teacher in China. She rarely sang and danced in front of her students, but now she sings and dances. Jiang believes her teaching style is changing for the better, and that students will enjoy it even more when they return home.

Visual teaching, as the name implies, means that teachers use intuitive teaching methods to help teaching and intuitively link language with teaching content. For example, teachers can use pictures, objects and audio-visual materials to assist teaching.

Performance teaching refers to that the teacher demonstrates the language information to be conveyed through vivid body language, and the learner imitates and describes the action with the target language after understanding it. For example, Ms. Yang Xiaoye from Confucius Institute at the University of Kentucky combined TPR with traditional festival teaching——Ms. Yang used TPR to let students know the story and customs of Mid-Autumn Festival, so that they could learn and experience our Mid-Autumn Festival happily. First of all, the story of Chang 'e flying to the moon in English is introduced to attract students' interest and understand the background of the festival. Familiarize yourself with the main words in the story such as "Mid-Autumn Festival, Chang 'e, Houyi, moon and moon cakes", then act out the story of "Chang 'e flying to the moon" using various Mid-Autumn Festival props. At first, it may be slow to tell and act out the story, but after the first time, the students can retell the story by themselves and act out the parts. Try to let the whole class participate in the performance process, for example, "There are 10 suns in the sky, then the next 10 students can hold the sun, and show the appearance of the sun rising and being shot down, other students can also show the weather is too hot and Houyi shot down the sun after the cheering scene". In short, it takes all hands to make a deeper impression. This kind of small drama performance is very popular with the students. One student even told Miss Yang during class that he went home and told his parents the story of the Mid-Autumn Festival. Therefore, the effect of this TPR teaching method is very obvious. [4]

Situational teaching means that teachers try their best to create a real language use situation in teaching, so that learners can understand and learn the language while feeling the real situation. For example, Ms. Yang applied TPR teaching method in the first week and taught students simple classroom rules. The first thing is to make up a catchy classroom password, just like the American teacher's "Give Me Five Rules", so Miss Yang made up the Chinese classroom rules, "Eyes, eyes, look; Ears, ears, listen; Mouth, mouth, quiet; Hands,

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hands, clap; Foot, foot, stand; Butt,butt, sit down." Each word is paired with an action throughout the instruction. (Here Miss Yang made little word cards, because she noticed that American teachers punch them and wear them around their necks, so that in the hallways, or anywhere else, they can be shown directly to keep students disciplined. Yang thinks this method is very good, and Chinese teachers can also use this method to avoid speaking English in teaching and give students appropriate prompts. After the students are familiar with it, the teacher can show the word card to say the first half, and the students continue the second half. It has been proved that students learn very quickly and it is very helpful for classroom management. Every time Miss Yang wants to catch the students' attention, she will say "eye eye", the students will answer "look", and then start teaching. Or a child to introduce themselves, will also use this method to let the students focus on the children on the stage. If the class is in a mess, Mr. Yang will immediately say "mouth mouth", the student will do the mouth sealing action to say "quiet", and then the class will be quiet. Especially when individual Table or classmates speak, the teacher can say "we say +Table 1/ name, mouth, mouth", and all students say "quiet" to the student, and the classroom will be quiet again. After learning this sentence pattern, students will consciously abide by the classroom rules, to speak to the students to remind.

No matter what kind of teaching mode, the basic teaching steps are similar, that is, teachers give instructions and demonstrate actions, learners observe and imitate; The teacher said the instruction does not demonstrate, the learner does the action performance; The teacher says the instruction does not demonstrate, the learner retells the instruction and demonstrates; One learner speaks the command, the other learner does the action, and so on. Sheng Yan believes that these teaching steps are used differently in different teaching modes, but they all emphasize the interactivity of language and movement and the subject position of learners in the learning process.[5]

3.Advantages and limitations of TPR teaching method

Since its birth, TPR teaching method has received wide response from all over the world. China is also using this efficient TPR teaching method, which has been widely recognized by educators, especially in the English education of young children. However, it cannot be conclusively stated that "Total Physical Response (TPR) teaching method" constitutes the sole or primary approach to education. While acknowledging the advantages of the TPR teaching method, we must also consider its inherent limitations.

The advantages of TPR teaching method are as follows: First, TPR teaching method enables students to learn in a very relaxed environment. Teachers should try their best to create a comfortable environment for learners so that they can have more opportunities to listen and practice. In this atmosphere, learners can master English through imitation, memorization and understanding. The second advantage of TPR is that learners can enjoy learning in class. In TPR, students don't have to sit in a chair all the time, they can move around the class at will. When using TPR teaching method, teachers do not need to do much preparation, because the activities of TPR teaching method are relatively simple. The third advantage of TPR teaching method is that it can effectively motivate learners to learn the language. In the process of using TPR teaching method, learners can follow teachers to do many physical activities, so the classroom atmosphere is comfortable. In this environment, learners' learning motivation will be stimulated. The fourth advantage of TPR is that it helps learners quickly understand the language they are learning. At the same time, it can also help learners establish the

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thinking mode of native speakers.

Therefore, TPR teaching method not only pays attention to learners' psychological and physiological learning mechanisms, but also follows the law of second language acquisition, that is, understanding precedes expression. Only when learners understand and understand the meaning contained in the language, can they use the language to communicate or respond correctly to the language. TPR teaching method takes learners as the main body and has remarkable effect in stimulating learners' interest and enthusiasm in learning. Because TPR teaching method often uses intuitive, lively and diverse teaching modes, it greatly improves learners' interest in learning and creates a relaxed and warm classroom atmosphere. In particular, classroom activities, such as games and performances, give full play to the subjective initiative of learners with a high degree of participation and sufficient language practice. Learners unconsciously complete the process of language learning when experiencing and participating in classroom activities designed by teachers, and the learning effect is remarkable.

TPR teaching method is also significant in the cultivation of learners' creativity. Learners in a relaxed and happy classroom learning atmosphere, no internal anxiety learning mood, creativity and initiative is easy to play. In addition, the TPR teaching method integrates various classroom activities and interdisciplinary communication experience, which provides individual learners with different hobbies with space to play and show their strengths and hobbies. Their display and performance, to some extent, is a good promotion and stimulation for other students' learning. Therefore, Ren Yuan believes that learners develop their innovation and learning ability in the process of learning from each other and being influenced by others.[6]

The limitations of TPR teaching method are as follows: Firstly, although TPR teaching method can also target learners at a higher level, it has high requirements on teachers, who need to do a lot of preparation work, which is a big challenge. The activities of TPR teaching method are relatively simple, which is more suitable for younger or lower grade learners, because learners in this age group are relatively low in comprehension, and the vivid and intuitive teaching mode of TPR teaching method can help them better understand the knowledge and apply it. It is not suitable for learners who need to learn in-depth and abstract content. [7] Secondly, it is easy for teachers to overuse TPR. For teaching objects with different personalities, TPR teaching method should also achieve "individualized teaching", which is a great challenge for shy and introverted students. TPR is effective only when students are active. Thirdly, TPR teaching method is a great challenge for teachers. At present, there are almost no textbooks written for the use of TPR teaching method. Teachers should design teaching models and select appropriate words and syntactic structures according to the content of textbooks and make preparations for class activities. When confronted with abstract and complex teaching content, it is difficult for teachers to design classroom activities, or to teach in the way of action performance, and the operation and implementation are difficult. Fourthly, TPR teaching method includes many classroom activities, such as games, role playing, group competition and so on. In this way, it will bring great challenges to classroom management (such as the control of classroom time, classroom chaos, noisy disorder, etc.). Fifthly, the basic teaching mode of the TPR teaching method is to listen to the instructions and then repeat the instructions to do the actions. Therefore, listening, speaking and doing are the skills that the teaching method pays more attention to. On the contrary, it does not pay enough attention to the cultivation of reading and writing ability.

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4.Revelations and suggestions

From the perspective of the American 5C standard, this paper analyzes the application of TPR teaching method in the Chinese language classroom of Confucius Institute at the University of Kentucky in the United States, and obtains the following enlightenment and suggestions for the future Chinese language international education:

4.1 Cultivate systematic thinking in international Chinese learning

Exploring the American 5C standard, we can find that it is the task and requirement of the 5C standard to cultivate systematic thinking in language learning. Whether it is the Chinese education in the University of Kentucky or primary and secondary schools in the United States, it is far from enough for teachers to pay attention only to the content of language form and grammar structure, but also to the content outside linguistics, such as interdisciplinary integration, oral communication teaching strategies, language application problems and so on. Therefore, to cultivate systematic thinking in international Chinese learning, it is not only necessary to choose teaching methods suitable for teaching objects and contents, but also to consider comprehensively whether the application of teaching methods can meet the needs of teaching interdisciplinary knowledge beyond linguistics and enable the teaching objects to develop in an all-round way.

4.2 Spread Chinese culture in innovative ways

Language carries culture, different countries use different languages, through the language can directly understand the language development and changes of different countries in different periods. Language teaching should involve culture teaching, but culture teaching is not to export culture blindly, but to cultivate cultural awareness in a strategic and methodical way. In the Chinese-themed classroom, in order to help the children comprehend the distinctions between Halloween and the Chinese Ghost Festival, Teacher Wei introduced the art of Chinese paper cutting. Together with the students, she proceeded to craft spider web decorations to adorn the classroom. By using the huge differences in the cultural connotations of bats, children can remember the “five blessings” of China, so as to understand the universal value of Chinese people. After Halloween, let the children summarize and make posters for the lower grade children to explain. Learn about restaurant and shopping themes on Thanksgiving. After learning about Thanksgiving food, do a little research on your favorite Thanksgiving food, and role-play with the kids in the classroom using plasticine, acting out my Thanksgiving meal in the cafeteria. Learn Chinese food, compare and discuss the similarities and differences between Thanksgiving and Mid-Autumn Festival, and make posters to summarize and display. Learn how to buy, learn how to bargain, introduce China's Singles' Day and compare it with Black Friday and Cyber Monday in the US.

Teachers can choose appropriate teaching methods according to different teaching objectives and contents, and introduce Chinese culture in innovative ways while teaching language knowledge, so as to cultivate language learners' intercultural communicative competence, which plays a complementary role in language teaching.

4.3 Cultivate and stimulate learners' learning strategies

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For learners, how to improve the efficiency and effect of language learning is the focus of 5C standard. According to Scoverl , learning strategies include cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, compensatory strategies, social strategies, emotional strategies and memory strategies. [8] Language teachers themselves should follow up and optimize teaching concepts and teaching methods, be good at inspiring learners' pioneering thinking and innovative ability, and cultivate and stimulate learners' learning strategies.

4.4 Establish multidisciplinary integration

The educators at the Confucius Institute at the University of Kentucky have adeptly integrated the language with various other disciplines, effectively dismantling the isolated silos that exist between them. They endeavor to break down the barriers of linguistic isolation, character isolation, and syntactic isolation, fostering an interdisciplinary approach. Through this integration, learners are able to access a diverse array of information, thereby facilitating the holistic and modern development of Chinese language education.

4.5 Multimedia science assisted teaching

In the wake of rapid technological progress in the 21st century, language learning has increasingly leveraged multimedia and cutting-edge scientific technologies to augment instructional practices. [9] The 5C standards similarly accord significant importance to the integration of multimedia technology within language classrooms, and the esteemed educators at the Confucius Institute at the University of Kentucky have contributed invaluable resources in the form of teaching technology tools. Notably, Teacher Cheng Labing has employed Quizlet for vocabulary instruction, FlipAlbum to facilitate guided reading exercises, Focusky for presenting learning outcomes, Quizizz for conducting assessments, and VoiceThread to guide recitation activities. Furthermore, Teacher Cheng has pioneered the exploration of utilizing the “Charades” application in conjunction with a flashcard-based teaching platform named Cram within Chinese language classrooms, thereby inspiring others to delve into the realm of vocabulary instruction.

The incorporation of multimedia technology effortlessly introduces authentic linguistic contexts into the classroom setting, particularly benefiting younger language learners. Crafting a classroom environment that is simultaneously engaging, communicative, and practical poses a considerable challenge for educators, given the high demands placed on their expertise. Consequently, the utilization of technological teaching methodologies by teachers serves as a crucial aid in the successful accomplishment of instructional objectives.

5.Conclusions

The exploration of the Total Physical Response (TPR) teaching methodology within the context of Chinese language education in American K-12 institutions, as exemplified by the innovative practices of Ms. Yang at the Confucius Institute, has yielded insightful and promising results. This study has demonstrated that TPR, by creating immersive language learning situations and integrating physical movements, significantly enhances language acquisition, fosters an engaging learning environment, and strengthens classroom discipline.

Ms. Yang’s creative adaptation of TPR, utilizing catchy classroom chants and visual word cards, has showcased the method's versatility and effectiveness in a non-Chinese speaking environment. This approach has minimized the reliance on English instructions, thereby promoting a more immersive Chinese language expe-

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rience. The enthusiastic response and rapid learning observed among students affirm the power of situational teaching in facilitating language learning and retention.

Furthermore, the integration of TPR into various aspects of Chinese language instruction, such as vocabulary building, grammatical structures, and cultural understanding, highlights its comprehensive educational value. By incorporating TPR, educators can not only improve linguistic skills but also cultivate a deeper appreciation for Chinese culture and foster critical thinking among learners.

In conclusion, the TPR teaching methodology has proven to be a valuable asset in the field of Chinese language education in American K-12 schools. Its emphasis on experiential learning, combined with the use of physical actions and visual aids, creates a dynamic and effective learning environment. As the global demand for Chinese language proficiency continues to grow, the adoption and refinement of TPR and other innovative teaching methods will be crucial in meeting the evolving needs of language learners. This study serves as a testament to the potential of TPR in revolutionizing Chinese language education and inspiring future pedagogical advancements.

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