A Logical Exploration of Literacy Instruction in the Lower Elementary Grades

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Abstract: Chinese characters are the spiritual bond of the Chinese nation that has lasted for 5000 years, and learning Chinese characters well plays an important role for primary school students, especially those in the first school year. The purpose of this paper is, based on the standards and the unified version of the textbook of the first school period, to explore the goals of literacy teaching in primary school language in the first school period and to advocate strategies based on word theory and learning conditions. It is hoped that the crude study will facilitate the work of frontline teachers in their literacy teaching practices.

Keywords: Primary language, Literacy teaching, Teaching materials, Teaching strategies.

1. Introduction

Heidegger said that mankind has a homeland and is rooted in tradition, and that traditional culture plays an important role in the inheritance of the five thousand years of Chinese civilization[1]. Hua Luogeng said, because the language is born important, will not speak, will not write; line, the not far, exist, the soon[2]. Traditional culture is the national soul of the Chinese nation; Chinese characters, an important carrier of traditional Chinese culture, contains a wealth of cultural connotations. Liu Bin once said that education in its true sense begins with literacy, which is the foundation of all education[3]. For primary school students in the first year of school, learning Chinese characters well is crucial to “fasten the first button of life” and help students in further language learning.

2. Main Objectives of Teaching Literacy and Writing

The teaching of literacy and writing, which includes the teaching of Hanyu pinyin, literacy and writing, is one of the fundamental components of primary language teaching. Clarifying and following the goals of literacy and writing instruction can provide key anchors and overall ideas for language teaching practice.

2.1 Building on the Curriculum and Grasping the Direction

In the (2022 version) Language Curriculum Standards, the literacy and writing requirements for the first school year (Grade 1 and 2) are as follows: enjoy learning Chinese characters and have the desire to read and write on their own initiative; know about 1,600 commonly used Chinese characters, of which, about 800 are written; and learn to read and write independently. A Word List is attached to the appendices of the standards, at the end of the textbooks for Grade 2 (Upper), Grade 2 (Lower) and subsequent grades, for students to study, and for cross-referencing and reference when reviewing.

Literacy and writing have different cognitive laws, and traditional language education in China has long recognized this point. At the end of the Qing Dynasty, learning from foreign experience, once “recognize, speak and write”, go hand in hand; “the new standard” in recognition of the characteristics of Chinese characters on the basis of the “knowledge and writing stream, more knowledge and less writing” as a the “New Curriculum”, in recognition of the characteristics of Chinese characters, includes the concept of “separation of knowledge and writing, more knowledge and less writing” as a basic concept. As the name implies, “knowledge” only requires accurate pronunciation and general understanding of the meaning, while “writing” also requires mastering the correct way of writing the character, and even the use of the character in reading and writing. The word “write” and “know” are both based on the sound of the word and the correct identification of the form.

The “knowledge and writing diversion, more knowledge and less writing” is in line with the law of language learning for children in the early grades, on the one hand, the diversion can be formed separately, the sequence of writing training guidance for students in the early grades, although writing late, writing less, but, help write well; on the other hand, more literacy, so that reading first, less time to write, more time to spend, listening, speaking, reading training, speaking and reading training. Mr. Zhang Xiaochun paid much attention to practice, he suggested that practice should be practiced to the point, the training of listening, speaking, reading, writing and thinking naturally throughout the teaching activities[4].

In the “New Curriculum”, it is stipulated that Pinyin is an auxiliary tool for primary school students to learn Chinese characters, therefore, in the learning of Pinyin, part of the content of literacy can be interspersed. For example, in the lesson “b p m f” in the first grade book, there is the recognition of “dad and mom”.

2.2 Teaching with Fun based on the Teaching Materials

In the lower grades, there are structural links between the words in each lesson, and there is continuity and some commonality in the strokes, stroke order, partials or structural patterns. For example, in the first grade, “Mouth, Ears and Eyes” is a pictorial literacy lesson to help students understand themselves, and “Sun, Moon, Water and Fire” is a pictorial literacy lesson to help students understand the history of
human development. In terms of the language tools required by the standards, the editor’s intention is to let students understand the characteristics of Chinese characters and the traditional method of word formation; in terms of humanities, the editor’s intention is to let students feel the cultural connotation and the wisdom of the ancient people in making words through this arrangement. “The purpose of traditional culture education is to ‘pass on’, not just ‘know’.”[5] Teachers should be full of enthusiasm to build bridges and pave the way for students, to help them, to find their interest embedded in the words, so that literacy learning, can also be fun and radiant[6].

The second (lower) literacy unit is written in three areas: first, songs. For example, lessons 1 and 2 of the literacy unit. When teaching such literacy lessons, a learning context is created in which words are exchanged and spoken first, followed by the study of the text, and finally the text is read and recited. Advocate, in thematic oral communication to learn words and phrases. Two for Chinese character stories. For example, the literacy text “The story of ‘bei’” is about the evolution of the Chinese character “bei” and the theory of the character, which has the significance of the cultural heritage of Chinese characters. Sanai food names. For example, the literacy text “Chinese Food” is quite life-like. You can use “Chinese food” as the theme to prepare a learning newspaper, so that students can learn the words and feel the culture of Chinese food through task-driven. In the “Literacy Station” of the second (second) language garden, a new content of learning Chinese characters is proposed, requiring 78 more characters to be learned. The overall status of the “literacy stations” in II (Lower) is listed in Table 1 below.

| Table 1: Summary of vocabulary examples in the “Literacy Station” of the second volume of the Unified Second Grade |
|---|---|---|
| Garden | Example words and phrases | Character that is unfamiliar or not yet studied |
| one | 湖心亭，露天广场等 | 亭，台，画，街，馆，图，塔，客厅 |
| two | 教师，工程师等 | 程，魔术，建筑，演出，商务，词，分，养 |
| three | 甜津津，酸溜溜等 | 甜，酸，辣，苦，带，腻，酸，脆，面 |
| four | 陀螺，毽子等 | 陀，螺，螺，倒，裁，料，粉，控，形，克 |
| five | 厨房，厕所等 | 厨，厕，座，穴，室，院，空 |
| six | 博物馆，展览馆等 | 博，馆，展，览，研，究，学，词，诊 |
| Seven | 扫帚，抹布等 | 扫，帚，抹，拖，梳，刷，洗，晒，晾，拧，压，级 |
| eight | 钵子，铲子等 | 钵，铲，梅，梳，泡，洗，洗，晾，打，抹，玫 |

The arrangement of these new words and phrases is characterized by the fact that, first, the arrangement of words is independent rather than systematic. That is the material, is a non-continuous text. Second, the instruction is regular rather than random. The overall design and arrangement of these words reflects the goals of literacy instruction, and its characteristics. This is particularly evident in Language Garden III, V and VIII. The “Use of Words and Phrases” and “My Discoveries” in the Language Corner also cover the learning of many words and phrases. There are also ways to learn words, such as guessing the meaning of a word based on its side (Language Garden III), learning words that indicate mood (Language Garden IV), learning words that indicate laughter (Language Garden V), learning words that are repeated synonymously (Language Garden V), learning how to understand words (Language Garden VI), learning how to guess words (Language Garden VII), learning near-synonyms (Language Garden VIII), comparing different sides (Language Garden VIII), etc. (Language Garden VIII), etc.[7]. Let us further compare the first unit of the second grade book, “Guess the Word”, in which students can learn the vocabulary in the process of guessing the word, and also learn the structure of the word and the transformation of the radicals.

3. Basic Practice Pathways for Teaching Literacy and Writing

Goals are a guide to action and strategies are the basic path to reach them. Mastering their teaching objectives and strategies is an important starting point for effective teaching and research.

3.1 Building on Word Theory and Passing on Culture

The fundamental characteristic of Chinese characters is their ideographic nature. This ideographic nature is concentrated in four types of character formation methods. Pictograms and referential characters are combined into a single character, which used to be called a pure character. When children learn to read and write, they are first taught the pure form of the pictogram and the referential characters (Qing Dynasty teaching experience). This is the case; some statistics, “water” can be composed of 325 words, it can be seen, the strong ability of the monomeric word composition. When teaching, we should provide appropriate knowledge of pictograms and ideograms, and the appropriate method for primary school students is to explain the meaning of pictograms with the text. The lower primary language textbooks are particularly rich in pictographs. For example, man, mouth, hand, knife, ear, eye, stone, and so on. Huiyi, as the name implies, will be synthesized into meaning. From the meaning of the word meaning can be seen, specify the composition of the word meaning after the characteristics of particularly easy and literate character, primary school common meaning of the word, there are “stink, class, Wu, letter, accounted for, name, Bin, Ming, bark, forest, inferior, by virtue of, leng, step, and, benefit, north, an, pregnant, for, take” and so on. Therefore, in teaching literacy, teachers can incorporate word-building principles to add interest. However, it is important to note that, firstly, teachers should not use the current standardized forms...
as the basis for analysis, and secondly, they should not use “popular words” to mislead students.

Wang Yun of the Qing Dynasty, mentioned in “The Law of the Shepherd’s Children” that recognizing the upper and lower characters can be done by using what is on top and what is underneath to tell. Therefore, when teachers teach literacy and writing, they can relate, and combine with students’ life reality, for example, a variety of practical activities of speaking, writing, reading, and reciting. As Dewey said, “learning in life” and bringing literacy teaching to life can stimulate students’ intentional attention and improve their learning efficiency.

Teachers can encourage students, read more books outside the classroom, have word recognition competitions, and also guide them to become literate in life, with the names of shops on the street, supermarket items, TV programmes, etc., everywhere. Of course, teachers need to stimulate students’ internal drive and give them the opportunity to show the fruits of their work. Daily displays, weekly competitions, and monthly homemade literacy newspapers allow for the most creative literacy methods for all to learn. Teachers can hold occasional literacy thematic activities, such as Animal World, Fruit Kingdom, and Journey to Space, etc. Students will enjoy literacy education more as they experience the success and joy of literacy. However, at the same time, teachers should also take care to help and guide students to differentiate and identify the “harmonic” packages they encounter in their lives, and to recognize the correct Chinese characters and words without being misled[8].

3.2 Building on the Learning Situation and Learning Something

3.2.1 Growing together by adapting education to the needs of the individual

According to a survey conducted by Professor Wu Zhonghao in a group of primary schools in Shanghai and Zhejiang, it was found that there was a great difference in the initial literacy (can write and read) of children enrolled in primary schools, none of the primary school students could not read a single word, 14.3% could read less than 20 words; 47.7% could read less than 100 words; 21.1% could read less than 200 words; 4.3% of the children already knew more than 500 Chinese characters. The most literate children already knew more than 1,200 characters before they entered school. On the whole, this difference is mainly between districts, schools and families[9]. Therefore, in teaching, teachers should pay attention to the differences between different students and tailor their teaching to their needs, while “not leaving a child behind”. For students who lack interest in writing, arrange for them to have more contact with children who write well and like to write, create an atmosphere and guide to cultivate interest; for students who are interested but do not get it right, they should, seize the moment and patiently demonstrate and guide.

3.2.2 Emphasis on attitude and habit development

Writing observations should focus on guiding students to make more observations. This includes careful observation while the teacher is demonstrating, careful reading of the posting before writing on their own, and overall observation and evaluation after writing. For each new character, the teacher should, demonstrate it on the board and give detailed instructions on the stroke order so that the student has a comprehensive overall impression of the character being written. The teacher should show the stroke order process through the writing of the model character; the students should, in turn, remember the stroke order of the character through practice in the book space. Backward strokes in students’ writing should be corrected promptly. After students have written, the teacher should immediately comment, correct and model the writing. Intuitively, if the stroke order is not standardized, not only is it uncomfortable to look at, but often the writing is poor as well. It is also beneficial for the development of good orderly habits and the appreciation of traditional culture in primary school students[10].

In reality, because the small muscles of elementary school students are not developed, often appear to hold the pencil too low, too tight, upper body or right or left, head down, elbows close to the table and other phenomena, the teacher should be persistent education to correct, strict requirements, patient and careful to guide writing is a skill, must be trained over a long period of time to achieve good results.

In teaching, one is to be strict with students in the lower grades, to develop a serious, non-sloppy writing attitude; the second is to inculcate a love of the motherland’s writing from the beauty of the Chinese character form, penetrating the emotional education. The teacher’s attitude, to a large extent, determines the attitude of the students in the lower section. The teacher’s board writing, therefore, must be standardized, correct and beautiful. However, in this process, teachers should also, pay attention to stimulate, students’ interest in literacy, not to teach literacy, on the hard, indoctrination[11].

3.2.3 Fun literacy with the help of games

Students in the lower grades are playful and active, and games, as it happens, are a haven for students. Therefore, in the teaching of literacy in the lower grades, teachers follow the psychological characteristics of students to teach and play. For example, they can use word reading “picking fruit”, word picture matching “plastering”, “sending words home” (categorizing radicals), “Chinese characters change” (adding and subtracting strokes to make new words), and “Chinese characters change” (adding and subtracting strokes to make new words). “(adding and subtracting strokes to make new words), word formation game “find friends”, error correction “patching”, “smart dolls remembering words” (sharing ways to remember words) The game is based on the “I guess, I guess, I guess” (riddles to guess words), “Little postman delivers letters”, “I add colorful pens to Chinese characters” and other games. “I dress the character in color” is a game in which students mark the wrong strokes in a character, or the parts of a character that should be noticed or confused, with a special colored pen. “Little Postman Delivers Letters”, on the other hand, involves choosing a child who is listening carefully to the lesson to be the postman and send the raw character cards as letters to the rest of the class, with the child who receives the letter standing up and leading the reading. Whatever the specific form, the appeal of the game
itself has introduced students to a literacy paradise, thus making literacy teaching in a lively atmosphere, and the effect of literacy, is enhanced. It can be said that, compared to the lively reading and writing teaching, the literacy teaching in the lower grades is like a simple stone, which strengthens the foundation for the students[12].

4. Summary

Teaching is like crossing a river, the teaching method is the boat, no boat, it is looking at the ocean and sighing. There is a method of teaching, but there is no definite method of teaching, and it is important to get it right. Wrong teaching methods will make students develop bad learning habits, distorted outlook on life and values, which will affect the child’s life. In contrast, teaching literacy to students in a gradual and orderly manner, in accordance with their cognitive rules, can both, reduce their burden and, at the same time, improve their literacy efficiency and benefit them for life. Mother tongue security, mother tongue development, and the speed and quality of mother tongue transmission belong to the soft power of the country, and is a vital issue that is a national tragedy if not handled properly. Language teaching must lay the foundation for solving this problem. The language curriculum must do its best for the improvement of the cultural literacy of the nation. It is conducive to enhancing the soft power and influence of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics, so that “the Chinese nation, with more confidence and self-improvement, stands in the forest of the world’s nations”[13].

References