

# Application of “Combined Method” in Characters Teaching of TCFL\*

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**Abstract**—Chinese characters are considered to be the most difficult part in TCFL. Considering the characteristics of the three elements “shape, sound, meaning” in a Chinese characters, we make use of the “combined method” of the three elements in teaching, which will form polymerizations from three aspects. Thus, the isolated Chinese characters will form a big network, greatly improve the reproduction rate Chinese characters finally, and reach the result of learning the new by restudying the old.

**Index Terms**—contact, sound, shape, meaning, Chinese character teaching

## I. INTRODUCTION

As the record symbol of Chinese language, Chinese characters include rich cultural information, and for the foreign students learning Chinese, Chinese characters are considered to be the most difficult part all along. Famous linguist in china Lv Shuxiang once thought that why the Chinese characters are so difficult to learn, because they are difficult to recognize, difficult to write, the number of Chinese characters is very big, and there are a lot of crossing relation among the shape, pronunciation, meaning, they are easily to be mistaken. In our opinion, the reasons why they are difficult to learn are the following, first, because it is ideographic characters, which is huge different from Alphabetic writing word; the second is the large number, the total of it is more than sixty thousand, and the characters commonly used in daily life are three thousand or so, if memorized word by word in isolation, it is very easy to forget; the third is the diversity of Chinese characters strokes, complex structure, characters of similar appearance which is difficult to distinguish. Therefore, how to improve and enhance the characters teaching and learning in TCFL is a topic of ongoing research.

Previous research about teaching of Chinese characters has achieved fruitful results (Chen Fu 1998, Lv Bisong 1999, Wan Yexin 2004, Sun Dejin 2006, Zhou Jian 2007, Zhao Jinming 2008, etc.) These studies mainly concentrated in the Chinese character teaching principle, teaching method research, structure characteristic analysis of Chinese characters, Chinese character acquisition error analysis, etc. Some of these achievements has become the consensus, such as in Chinese characters teaching, recognize and write should be separated, it is considered that more recognize and less write, Chinese characters teaching should combine with other Chinese courses teaching, for example, should combine with the compressive reading class, spoken class, and so on.

Through teaching practice we come to find, Considering the characteristics of “shape, sound, meaning” in a Chinese characters, making use of “combined method” of the three elements in teaching, which will form polymerization from three aspects. Thus, The isolated Chinese characters will form a big network, greatly improve the reproduction rate Chinese characters finally, and reach the result of learning the new by restudying the old.

## II. WHY USE “COMBINED METHOD” IN CHARACTERS TEACHING OF TCFL?

### A. Objective, Features of the Chinese Characters and “Combined Method”

Text is the record of language, As mentioned above, Chinese character is ideographic character, which is huge different from Alphabetic writing word. The former record semantics directly, and record voice indirectly, in contrast, the latter record voice directly, and record semantics indirectly. Chinese characters is only ideograms used in the world, So the shape always carries the meaning information which can be analyzed.(Wang Ning, 2002)Each Chinese character has a pronunciation, and each one has a shape, for the foreign students, it is very difficult to recognize and memorize. conformation of Chinese character is very complex, every Chinese character can be analyzed from many different levels, it is highly-synthetic, and the amount of information of it is very large. One Chinese character includes the information as following, 1.pronunciation information, 2.meaning information, 3.the whole shape features information, 4.kinds of components information, 5.compenents structure information, 6.kinds of strokes information, 7.the number of strokes information, 8.the length of strokes information, 9, the strokes order information, 10, radical information,11. Other related information.(Zhang Huifen,1997)For Chinese people, so much amount of information in Chinese characters is very difficult to accept if there isn't a suitable way, let alone the foreign students, the Chinese characters difficult degree

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in writing and recognition can be imagined. In addition, due to the early form of Chinese characters proceeding from the shape and meaning, according to the character – creation principle, it is easier for foreign students to master pictographic characters, indicative characters and associative characters. However, after thousands of years of shape evolution, the characters have lost ideographic function for a long time, most of them become neither ideographic nor phonetic. In the foreign students' eyes, Chinese characters are a pure bunch of word marks combined by zigzag strokes disorderedly, and most of these characters are common-used words and morphemes. In view of the uniqueness of Chinese characters, we believe that the Chinese characters teaching to the foreign students must highlight the characteristics of Chinese characters "ideographic" and Chinese character configuration of regularity and motivation, and make use of "combined method" of the three elements "shape, sound, meaning" in teaching, to improve the students' learning efficiency of Chinese characters.

#### B. *Subjectively, Teaching Object and "Combined Method"*

For the Chinese characters teaching of TCFL, teaching object is the foreign students. From this point of view, the Chinese characters teaching to the foreign students is different from the general Chinese characters teaching. First, Foreign students knew little about Chinese characters, if some students have known something about it, maybe just a sense of mystery and fear, which has been discussed in the above. Second, the teaching objects are adults, they only have the knowledge and skills of the alphabetic writing, and they have almost no knowledge about the Chinese and Chinese characters, is very strange to the Chinese traditional culture and modern culture. Third, The memory of the foreign students is not as good as the Chinese students, and their environment of Chinese characters is not as good as the Chinese students immersed in the Chinese characters as they grow up, but their understanding ability is stronger, and most of them have higher Chinese language quality and cultural quality. They have a certain knowledge base and understanding ability, and have accumulated a certain life experience and learning experience, they can't, also needn't to follow a gradual natural acquisition law completely, from easy to difficult, from less to more. Unlike children, adults have their own acquisition law, the Chinese characters teaching to them should follow the rules of second language acquisition. For those characteristics of the foreign students discussed above, how to carry out the effective Chinese characters teaching? The best way is to cultivate students' interest of Chinese characters, to guide the students to explore and experience of Chinese character laws and configuration of regularity and motivation, and to take advantage of the rule and the motivation to memorize the Chinese characters. According to our teaching experience, "combined method" is an effective method to achieve this goal.

### III. THE PRONUNCIATION CONTACT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS AND WORDS

#### A. *The Contact of Homophones*

Number of homophones in the Chinese characters statistics are hard to count up, there are about 12000 prefix words in the "Modern Chinese Dictionary", but only 316 kinds of pronunciation, therefore, There will be a large number of homonyms. For the foreign students learning Chinese at beginning, they know very few Chinese knowledge, when meeting the homophone in Chinese learning, they may be very confused. Teachers were often asked about homophone in the class, at this time, we should tell the foreign students, being different from the spelling alphabet, which record phonemes and is used by Most people in the world, each Chinese character consists of various strokes formed by different dots or lines as the basic components, and it is a morpheme-writing, because Chinese character consists of the individual word which is the record of Chinese morpheme. Chinese syllables are very few, Homophone words in Chinese is a very common phenomenon. At the same time, Teachers can inspire the students to say that their own understanding of the homophone phenomenon, and let them say the difference among their meaning and shape. For example, "一(yī one)—衣(yī cloth)" "白(bái white)—百(bǎi hundred)" "常常(chángcháng often)—尝尝(chángcháng taste)" "反应(fǎnying reaction)—反映(fǎnying reflect)" and so on, On the one hand, using the homophones in Chinese, we can inspire them to think more, For example, when learning the Chinese characters "尝", we will extend to the word "尝尝", then, we can inspire the students we had learned another word which has the same Pinyin "常常"; on the other hand, Because of the same sound, and the similar shape sometimes, the word representation which is learned previously and comparison of memory, will deepen students' understanding of this group words.

#### B. *The Contact of Polyphones*

Polyphones in Chinese character is another part of the sound Contact in teaching Chinese characters to foreigners, and is a difficult for the foreign students.

There are two aspects in Polyphones: Polyphones with the same meaning and Polyphones with different meaning. The former such as "系", which has two pronunciation "jì" and "xì", meaning of them are "Tied up". In the teaching, we should tell the students the nuances of two meanings. Generally speaking, we call "long-Tied up" is "xì", Such as, for "horse" "ship" "Kite" and "short-Tied up" is "jì", and "short-Tied up" is "jì", Such as, for "Shoes" "button". The latter such as "得", foreign students often learn several Pinyin of it at the beginning, and can't learn them well, using the "combined method", we can contact different conditions of them in teaching, match specific sound up with specific words, sentence (context). Thus, the students will clarify the meaning and usage of "得". For example, in "得到"(dédào,

get; obtain) “获得” (huò dé get; obtain), “得” is verb, “已经十点了, 我得 (dēi) 走了” (Ten, I have to go.), “得” is auxiliary verb, the meaning of it is “need” “should”, but “玛丽的汉语说得 (de) 非常好” (Marie speaks Chinese very well), “得” is auxiliary, used in the after of adjectives and verbs, connecting the complement of degree or result. There are a lot of polyphonic words, such as “大夫” “东西” “肚子”, each has two pronunciations, the pronunciations of “大夫” are “dàifu” and “dàfū”, “dàifu” is doctor, and “dàfū” is a ancient official titles. “东西” has two pronunciations “dōngxī” and “dōngxì”, the former is directions east and west, and the latter one refers to various things.

Using the “combined method”, teachers match specific sound up with specific context, Let the students have a better understanding of the polyphones, on the basis of which to establish the mental character and word lexicon, and read the polyphone word pronunciation accurately in the specific context, and understand how to use them.

#### IV. SHAPE CONTACT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS

Chinese Characters can be divided into three levels: strokes, character component, whole word, the strokes is the smallest unit of Chinese characters, character component is the configuration of Chinese characters, in the characters, they have many functions, for example, express characters’ meaning, sound, and shape, the whole character is unit of using, and it is entity of shape, sound, and meaning. According to this, we will analyse the shape contact of Chinese characters from the character component contact and the whole characters contact.

##### A. *The Contact among the Chinese Characters with Similar Shape*

For the foreign students, Chinese is so difficult to learn is that large numbers of similar characters and words whose shape and stroke are very similar, the characteristic is that the stroke number of these characters are the same or similar, there is only some little difference of “丶 一 | 丿 ㇇” in the key parts, so we can’t be careless in learning, and can not be negligent in writing, a little difference may make big mistake. For example, “己—巳” “土—士” “千—干—于” “王—丰” “午—牛”, etc, the strokes of them are the same, and shapes are similar, only a little difference. However, the shapes and structures of these characters “兔—免” “体—休” “鸟—乌” are the same, the difference of them is that one more or less stroke, and some ones’ shapes and strokes are the same, only the position of one stroke is different, for example, “太—犬” “乒—乓” “玉—主”, etc, some characters even have the same components, only positions are different, for example, “杏—呆” “部—陪”, etc, in the Chinese character teaching to foreign students, We must clarify the characteristics of the shape of the similar word first, and then we can focus on the explanation and differentiation in teaching. The importance of differentiation is similar characters of single-component, we should make it clear where is the difference. For example, “土—土”, the difference between them is the long or short of the bottom “一”. and the difference between “干—千” is upper “丿” and“㇇”

##### B. *The Contact among the Chinese Characters with the Same Radicals and Components*

From the perspective of character shape, the structures of many characters are the same, most of the components and radicals are the same, the difference is one component. For example, top-bottom structure characters, “密—蜜” “睛—晴” “荷—菏” “复—夏” etc; left-right structure characters, “活—话” “没—设” “姐—妹” “料—科” etc; enclosed structure characters, “庠—痒” “间—问” “同—用” “区—匹” “国—图” etc; left-middle-right characters, “辨—辩—辨—瓣” “微—徵—徽” “褪—腿” etc. In Chinese character teaching, we should summarize these characters with the same structures and components occasionally, keep these characters appear in their brain continually, certainly, using different teaching method, we can ask questions, according to the context, play games, competition of guessing word, and so on. in addition, the structures of some characters are similar, and each component of each characters is the same, For example, “森—森—晶—品—磊” “林—朋—从—竹—双” “哥—多”, etc, which will also form different polymerization, to enhance the memory of students to these characters.

#### V. MEANING CONTACT OF CHINESE CHARACTERS AND WORDS

The meaning of Chinese characters and words as a link, Chinese characters and words can form different polymerization, which is mainly reflected in the synonymy, antonym, polysemantic and the same kind words .

##### A. *The Contact of Synonymy*

In Chinese, the same thing, the same nature and state, the same motion, may be expressed by several different words, which will form different polymerization, and the synonymy came into being. For example, the synonymy about things phenomenon, “盗—贼”(thief), “言—语”(speak), “道—路”(road), “仇人—敌人”(enemy), “父亲—爸爸”(father), etc; about motion, “购—买”(buy), “售—卖”(sell), “步行—走路”(walk), “说话—聊天”(chat), etc; about nature and state, “胖—肥”(fat), “缓—慢”(slow), “疼—痛”(painful), “平静—安静”(peaceful), “美丽—漂亮—好看”(beautiful), etc. Consistent with the basic meaning of these synonyms, but also there is a large or small, or explicit or implicit differences between them. These differences, especially some of subtle differences, which is the teachers need to focus on in the teaching. When learning, the foreign students not only need to pay attention to the same between synonyms,

but also need to identify the “differences” between them, classifying these words furtherly, We compare and learn the synonymy words together, on the one hand, we will have a deeper understanding of word meaning and the memory to the characters’ forms, on the other hand, we differentiate the language units of similar meaning. Of course, in the process of differentiation, we should put these synonyms in larger locale, such as in phrases, in sentences, and their meaning can be highlighted, we will learn about the synonyms’ differences in scope of expression, extent, color, style, matching, etc, and then we will know how to use them in a different appropriate environment.

#### B. *The Contact of Antonym*

We should pay attention to the antonyms in the process of Chinese Teaching to foreign students, these antonyms or reflect things phenomenon, or reflect the nature of the state, or reflect the motion, For example, the antonym about things phenomenon, “左(left)—右(right)”, “早(early)—晚(late)”, “睡(sleep)—醒(awake)”, “古代(old time)—现代(modern time)”, “朋友(friend)—敌人(enemy)”, etc; about nature and state, “近(near)—远(far)”, “高(high)—低(low)”, “大(big)—小(small)”, “漂亮(beautiful)—丑陋(ugly)”, “纯洁(pure)—肮脏(dirty)”, etc; about motion, “买(buy)—卖(sell)”, “出(exit)—入(enter)”, “爱(love)—恨(hate)”, “增加(increase)—减少(decrease)”, etc. There are many antonym polymerization in Chinese, learning them together, we will have a deeper understanding of the meaning of words from both positive and negative aspects, and master their forms and pronunciations better.

#### C. *The Contact of the Same Kind Words*

According to some criteria, we can classify things in the objective world, some things belong to the same big category, but belong to different small categories respectively, or belong to a whole, but belong to different parts respectively, the same kind words have the meaning of the same concept, and reflect the same category meaning, and they will form different polymerization, which reflects the link and the systematicness of objective things systemic. There will be some differences when the objective world is divided by people, because of differences in language and culture. For the foreign students, most of whom have had a systematic understanding to the objective world, but lack of the understanding of the specific performance in another language. According to the characteristic, we can make full use of their formed systemic cognition to objective things, and summarized the members of polymerization pertinently. For example, the same kind words about taste, 酸(sour), 甜(sweet), 苦(bitter), 辣(spicy), 咸(salty), etc; about color, 红(red), 绿(green), 黄(yellow), 白(white), 黑(black), 青(green), 紫(purple), 蓝(blue), etc; about natural phenomena, 风(wind), 雨(rain), 雷(thunder), 电(lightning), 云(cloud), 雪(snow), etc; about animals, 猫(cat), 狗(dog), 虎(tiger), 鸡(chicken), 鸭(duck), 牛(cow), 羊(sheep), 鱼(fish), 鸟(bird), 狮(lion), 蝇(fly), 熊(bear), 猴(monkey), etc; about relatives, 爸(father), 妈(mother), 弟(brother), 父(father), 姑(aunt), 姐(sister), 叔(uncle), 孙(grandson), 爷(grandfather), etc. These same kind words can help the learners recognize ,understanding and memorize other words and characters in semantic fields, in turn, studying the related words in the same semantic field will strengthen their understanding of the links between people and things, things and things.

#### D. *The Contact of Polysemantic*

In Chinese, most characters and words have not only a meaning, but have two, three or even more meanings, there are links between some of these meanings, and some have no link, but can form some polymerizations by the same word as a link, in the character teaching of TCFL, we can make use of these polymerizations, and timely explain the meaning of other words with context, which is an appropriate character and word teaching methods. As we all know, the Chinese word “打” has many meaning, for example, fights; scoop up; engaged; striking object with hand or utensils; manufacturing, and so on, we can explain some common meanings of it in daily life with sentence and words“打架”(fight) “打饭”(get or buy canteen meals) “打工”(do work for others) “打门”(knock the door) “打毛衣”(knitting), etc, and the foreign students will have a deeper understanding of “打”. Another example “家” has the meaning "family home", such as, “我的家在北京”( my home in Beijing), In addition, “people who grasp some specialized knowledge or engage in certain specific activities” in the words of 画家(painters), 政治家(politicians), 科学家(scientists), furthermore, “家”can be used as measure word, we can say “一家饭馆”(a restaurant) “一家书店”(a bookstore). Through the links and explanation of polysemantic, foreign students will have a more structured understanding to the meaning of characters and words, of course, will have more profound memories.

## VI. SUMMARY

Above, we analyse the characters teaching Chinese as a foreign language from the following three angles, the Contact in the sound of Chinese characters and words, shape contact of Chinese characters, meaning contact of Chinese characters and words, while, that we carry out the Chinese characters teaching from the above three aspects is significance in the following aspects. First, It's not hard to see from the characteristic of the Chinese characters with similar shape, shape of Chinese characters carry the heavy responsibility of recording Chinese words’ pronunciation and meaning , which behind the shape of similar Chinese characters will be the password in the foreign students’ opinion, however, the structure and shape of Chinese characters have strong regularity, that we put the characters with the same

or similar structures or shapes together is aim to let the learners find the regularities, once they master the structure of Chinese characters and the regularities of characters shape showing mean or sound, and have a corresponding sense of Chinese characters, the confusion to the Chinese characters with similar shape will decrease. Second, with the contact of sound of Chinese characters and words, shape contact of Chinese characters, meaning contact of Chinese characters and words, each of which will form different polymerization, teachers can compare them in teaching, and the students can have a much deeper understanding and impression of them, certainly, the errors will be reduced. Third, teachers teach the Chinese characters with the context(Words and sentences)through the contact of the three aspects on pronunciation, shape, meaning, the reproduction rate of Chinese characters words will be Greatly improved, and reach the result of learning the new by restudying the old.

The contact among the characters can be from multiple directions, the Chinese characters teaching to foreign students can take pronunciation as a link, and also shape ,meaning as a link, and teacher should pay attention to the sound contact, the shape contact and the meaning contact of Chinese characters, the contact can occur as the occasion demands, certainly ,we can carry out the contact teaching systematically, thus, the students will grasp the similarities and differences of the sound, form and meaning of characters and words, which improve the effect of the Chinese character learning that knowing the new with the old and increasing the repetition rate of Chinese characters.

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