

THE APPLICATION OF A GAME METHOD IN TEACHING CHINESE: A CASE OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE AT V.N. KARAZIN KHARKIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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In teaching Chinese as a second language, the game method refers to the method in which the teacher uses the means of fun, flexibility and diversity to spark the enthusiasm of the students or to consolidate what they have learned. And the games can be used before the start of the class, in the middle of the class or before the end of the class. In addition, this approach can be adopted from in the primary schools to universities, from the Chinese learning beginners to the advanced Chinese learners.

With the increasing people studying Chinese abroad recent years, the method of traditional Chinese teaching approach has been challenged. Due to the different cultural backgrounds of students, the Chinese teachers might find that it is very difficult for foreign students to focus on the Chinese learning in the class, because they can not adapt themselves to that kind of exam-oriented teaching method Chinese teachers usually adopt and the cram-studying way many Chinese students used. However, as there are more and more young teachers devoted themselves to the Chinese teaching career, this method of “education through fun” has also attracted more and more attention from the TCSL (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) teachers, those young teachers in particular, as they came to realize that “the aim of teaching the second language is no doubt to develop the communication skills of those learners”.

Therefore, more TCSL teachers have begun to transform from the traditional Chinese class model of “teacher-centered” to a brand new model of “student-centered”, and the “game method” plays a particularly important role in the latter. Based on the author’s experience, the author has illustrated eight games implemented in the class of HSK Level 2 in Confucius Institute at Kharkiv National University in Ukraine as example. The author is going to discuss the entire procure of implementing the games, including the name of the game, the advantages and disadvantages of the games and so on.

Apart from the mentioned above, the author is going to discuss the aspects teachers should pay attention to the process of the game in the class and the role teachers should play in the application of the game method from three dimensions.

Key words: Chinese, game method, implementation process, improvement plan, teachers’ role.

Ван Ерсі. Використання ігрового методу у викладанні китайської мови: тематичне дослідження Інституту Конфуція у Харківському національному університеті імені В.Н. Каразіна. У навчанні китайської мови як іноземної метод гри належить до групи методів, у яких учитель використовує засоби веселощів, гнучкості і різноманітності. Ігри можна застосовувати перед початком, у середині або перед закінченням заняття. Крім того, цей підхід може бути використаний як у початковій школі, так і в університеті, як для початкового, так і для просунутого рівня осіб, які вивчають китайську мову. У зв’язку зі зростанням кількості людей, які вивчають китайську мову за кордоном, останнім часом був поставлений під сумнів метод традиційного викладання китайської мови. Іноземним студентам складно

адаптуватися до орієнтованого на іспит методу навчання, який застосовується китайськими вчителями. Однак, оскільки все більше й більше молодих учителів присвячують себе кар'єрі викладача китайської мови, метод «освіти через задоволення» також привертає все більше уваги з боку вчителів TCSL (викладання китайської мови як іноземної), оскільки вони зрозуміли, що мета викладання іноземної мови полягає в розвитку комунікативних навичок учнів. Більше вчителів TCSL почали переходити від традиційної китайської «орієнтованої на вчителя» моделі заняття до цілком нової – «студент-орієнтованої». Автор у якості прикладу описав вісім ігор, задіяних на заняттях HSK 2-го рівня в Інституті Конфуція в Харківському національному університеті імені В.Н. Каразіна. Автор окреслює весь процес реалізації ігор, зазначає назву гри, переваги і недоліки ігор тощо. Окрім зазначеного вище, автор називає аспекти, на які слід звернути увагу викладачам під час гри.

Ключові слова: ігровий метод, китайська мова, план покращення, процес упровадження, роль викладача.

Ван Эрсн. Использование игрового метода в преподавании китайского языка: тематическое исследование Института Конфуция в Харьковском национальном университете имени В.Н. Каразина. При обучении китайскому языку как иностранному, игровой метод относится к группе методов, в которых учитель использует средства развлечения, гибкости и разнообразия, чтобы вызвать энтузиазм учащихся или закрепить то, что они изучили. Игры можно использовать до начала урока, в середине урока или перед окончанием урока. Кроме того, этот подход может быть принят как в начальных школах, так и в университетах, как для учеников на начальном этапе изучения китайского языка, так и для продвинутых в его изучении. В последние годы все больше людей изучают китайский язык за рубежом, поэтому традиционный метод преподавания китайского языка подвергается сомнению. Иностранцам ученикам достаточно сложно сосредоточиться на изучении китайского языка в классе, потому что они не могут приспособиться к методу обучения, который ориентирован на экзамены. Метод «образования через удовольствие» также привлекает все больше внимания со стороны учителей TCSL («Преподавание китайского языка как иностранного»), молодых учителей, в частности тех, которые осознали, что целью обучения иностранному языку, несомненно, является развитие навыков общения учащихся. Поэтому все больше учителей TCSL начали переходить от традиционной китайской «ориентированной на учителя» модели занятия к такой, которая «ориентирована на ученика», и задействовать «метод игры». Автор в качестве примера приводит восемь игр, реализованных на занятиях HSK Level 2 в Институте Конфуция при Харьковском национальном университете имени В.Н. Каразина. Автор описывает всю процедуру внедрения игр, включая название игры, ее преимущества и недостатки. Автор определяет аспекты, на которые должны обращать внимание учителя в процессе игры, и роль, которую учителя должны выполнять в процессе использования игрового метода.

Ключевые слова: игровой метод, китайский язык, план улучшения, процес внедрения, роль преподавателя.

The degree of scientific research of the issue. Game methods have long been used in the teaching filed abroad. Many international educators believe that game method can assist teaching effectively, stimulate students for learning and make them enjoy the joy of learning

success, because “the interestingness is an important mean to spark the enthusiasm of students for study” [2].

Relatively speaking, game method teaching in China started up late. Chen Qinhe was the first scholar in China who explicitly proposed the important role of game teaching in education field, but the main object of his study were children. Later, Wu Yexian also had mentioned the game teaching method in the *Primary School Game Teaching Theory* and extended it to the field of primary school. At present, many scholars in China have also begun to study the use of game methods in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, and many related works have appeared. Such as Tian Weiping (1997), *Multidimensionality of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language*, Zhou Jian (1998), *Chinese Classroom Teaching Skills and Games*, Yang Jizhou and Cui Yonghua (2002), *Teaching Skills for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language*.

These studies mainly focused on the classification of game teaching methods, and their roles in the class of Chinese teaching. Based on the predecessors, the author is going to analyze and discuss the game method with the games that had been implemented in the class of the author.

The aim of the article is to discuss the role and significance of game method in teaching Chinese as a foreign language with the examples from the author’s class and the main beauty and some shortcomings of them. The game methods mentioned below are all from the real cases in the author’s personal teaching experience, which would provide readers with some references.

The topicality of the research. In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, the gamemethod refers to the method in which the teacher uses the means of fun, flexibility and diversity to spark the enthusiasm of the students or to consolidate what they have learnt. The acquisition process of the second foreign language, especially the acquisition of Chinese, which is quite different from the language of Western countries, tends to become harder and boring. With the increasing number of overseas students learning Chinese recent years, the traditional teaching methods are more likely to timid Chinese learners. With the growth of the number of students learning Chinese and the rejuvenation of Chinese teachers, this method of “education through fun” has also attracted more and more attention from teachers who

teach Chinese as a foreign language. Due to the different cultural backgrounds of students, more and more teachers have begun to transform the teaching model from “teacher-centered” to “student-centered”, and the “game method” plays a particularly important role in the latter. The game method can change the cramming learning of traditional Chinese education to a certain extent, so that students can transfer from being passive to active, and unconsciously memorize knowledge during the game. “It is no denying that the teaching can be demonstrated effectively, only when the enthusiasm and motivation of students have been activated” [3]. While experiencing the fun of the game, students consolidate what they have learnt, and find out the knowledge they have not mastered in a certain aspect. Thus, with the joint efforts of teachers and students, the teaching objectives of the class can be completed.

Presentation of the main material. Based on the author's experience, eight specific cases of eight games implemented in HSK class 2 have been listed below, from the name of the game to the process of implementation and advantages of them.

Case 1:

Game name: Tongue Twister.

Game time: 10 minutes.

Before the game: After transcribing the tongue twister on the blackboard, the teachers should put the Pin Yin above the Chinese characters and explain it first. The teacher will show an example and lead the reading. Then students will be given three minutes for preparation. The point is to see who can say the tongue twister fast and fluently in the specified time.

Tongue Twister content:

1. “吃葡萄不吐葡萄皮，不吃葡萄倒吐葡萄皮。” [ch'ih p'u t'ao pu t'u p'u t'ao p'i, pu ch'ih p'u t'ao tao t'u p'u t'ao p'i.] (The one eats grapes doesn't spit the peel, the one who eats grapes spits the peel).

2. “红凤凰，粉凤凰，粉红凤凰花凤凰 [hung feng huang, fen feng huang, fen hung feng huang hua feng huang.] (Red phoenix, pink phoenix, pink phoenix colourful phoenix).

During the game, students take the initiative to raise their hands to challenge their favorite tongue twister.

After the game, the teacher leads a reading again and correct the pronunciation mistakes of students.

Advantages: The tongue twister itself is a special form of art that greatly develops students' language and thinking skills. The Chinese tongue twister itself is different from the sentences in the textbooks, which is easy to give students a sense of novelty and arouse their interest. And not only in Chinese, but the tongue twisters of each language contain the cultural elements of the country. For example, in the tongue twister number two, the “凤凰” [feng huang] (phoenix) involved is the queen of birds in the Chinese legend. The game not only enables students to discern confusing pronunciations, but also exercises the flexibility of students' mouths and inspires their desire to try new things.

Highlights of the implementation: Some students challenged the tongue twister in the form of Rap and a quiet and shy boy took the initiative to challenge this game and completed the task perfectly.

Case 2:

Game Name: Making a story “word one by one”.

Game time: 15 minutes.

Before the game, the purpose of the game is to consolidate and review the learned words. Since the words used are those have just been learnt in the previous lesson, so the teacher only need to lead students to read first and introduce the rules of the game.

During the game: Taking the new words of I understand, but I remember incorrectly in the New Practical Chinese 2nd as an example. A main character “Sasha” could be set. And then students make sentence by speaking in turn with the words one by one in the book. The sentence needs to be made around the protagonist “Sasha”, and the next sentence must has certain relevance to the previous sentence. There are some sentences made by students below.

“Sasha 在饭馆当服务员” tsai fan kuan tang fu wu yüan] (Sasha is a waiter in the restaurant).

“他到茶的候, 吃了很多点心”。[t'a tao ch'a kuan te shih yu, ch'ih le hen to tien hsin] (He had many refreshments when he was in the tea house).

“服务员” [fu wu yüan] and “点心” [tien hsin] are the new words in the list.

The first student would start the game by making a sentence and be followed through until the last word of the text has been used.

After the game, the common grammatical mistakes would be pointed out and corrected, and the words that students did not fully grasp would be reviewed. Besides, recording down the story would be set as a homework.

Advantages: This kind of story review method can impress students more compare with direct dictation. The process of story making is not only a test of the mastery for the learnt words, but also of the ability to understand the sentences made by other students. Obviously, making sentences one by one is much less fun, and easier makes them mind-absent.

Highlights: There were some correct and funny sentences often made by students which set the whole class laugh. It is very beneficial to activate the atmosphere in the classroom and to enhance the affection between students.

Case 3:

Game name: You describe, I guess.

Game time: 25 minutes.

Before the game, a simple review of the names of vegetables and fruits which have been learned would be conducted by teacher and then students would be given 3 minutes for preparation. The aim is to review and consolidate the name of common fruits and vegetables.

During the game, the students would go to the front of the class to describe the fruit or vegetable without mentioning the name. And other students would make a guess. As long as that kind of fruit or vegetable has been named out, it would be written down on the blackboard. The fruit or vegetable that has been described cannot be described again. And the game would not end until the last student finished.

After the game, teacher should correct the typos of the Chinese characters on the blackboard and lead the students to read together.

Advantages of the game: Since the fruits and vegetables that have been described cannot be repeated, no students wanted to lag behind, so everyone was active in the game. Every student has the opportunity to play a role, thus the shorter the guess time would be, the greater sense of fun would be. So this game allows everyone to maintain a high concentration on the class and the full participation. The procedure

describing the fruits and vegetables is the exercise of the description ability and the detail presence ability of the students. It is also the exercise of listening to the students in the audience. The traditional method of learning and reviewing collective nouns is only for teachers to read the words on the books and repeated by the students or the direct translation method. After that, the teacher would extend something new based on the existing words. This game method allows students to switch from the learning model of a single input and no output to the learning model of a large number of interactive inputs and interactive outputs. This enables students not only to grasp the word itself, but also the feature of the word.

Highlights of implementation: If the name cannot be guessed out after the description of one student, questions about details would be come up with. This not only enhances the interactivity between students, but also develops the practical communication skill of students.

During the process of this game, the author found out that the description of Ukrainian students reflected strong local cultural features and logical thinking different from Chinese students. Let's take the following cases as an examples. For instance, a male student's description of banana was a kind of yellow African fruit. (Typical Chinese students' description would be a type of curved and yellow fruit). And a female student's description of potato was a kind of famous vegetable in The Republic of Belarus. (Typical Chinese students' description would be something delicious which can be made crisps and chips). What surprised me even more is the students in the audience gave quick, accurate and consistent answers while I had no clue at all. The cultural differences behind is worthy of further reflection.

Case 4:

Game name: self-directed play.

Game time: 30 minutes.

Before the game, the teacher would explain the new words and grammar of the story in the "*Reading and Retelling*" of *the New Practical Chinese 2nd* first. And then students would be divided into several groups and given seven minutes for adaption and rehearsal. After that, the play would be performed in front of the class one by one.

During the game, each group of students take the initiative to perform in front of the class. Until now, the stories adapted and performed mainly involved *What the Big Black Bear Said to You*, *Paint a Snake with Feet*, *The Dream of Red Mansion-The Love Story of Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu*, and so on.

After the game, the teacher should give affirmation and appreciation to students' performance and make some comments on it. For instance, the teacher should point out the mistakes of grammar and words in the dialogue and give credit for students' self-designed lines.

Advantages: This kind of approach is free from the boring and rigid "reading and retelling" form, allowing students to "read and retell" the article in a more vivid way, and to add their own understanding and innovation into the story.

Highlights of implementation: In the performance, I was pleasantly surprised by the fact that many students prepared the "props" for performances with the existing conditions. For example, when performing *What the Big Black Bear Said to You*, it was in winter. In one of the groups, a girl who played "big black bear" wore black fur coat and put the hair up into two buns to make herself more convincing. During the performance of *Paint a Snake with Feet*, a group of students also prepared Chinese classical music as background music. As a result, most students can retell the story they performed, in that they memorize the story in a subtle way during the adoption and performance.

Case 5:

Game name: You point, I say.

Game time: 5 minutes.

Before the game, the name of each part of the body would be introduced first, so the game is to consolidate the content learnt.

During the game, the teacher points a finger to a part of himself or herself, and the students need to give a quick response by saying the name of that part out loud. Mainly involved parts of body in the game: hair, eyes, ears, teeth, mouth, nose, hands, feet, thighs, calves, shoulders and so on.

After the game, review and read the words.

Advantages: Most of the teaching for the name of the parts of body adopts the direct translation method. When learning or reviewing, the students just repeat the reading of their teacher, which means there is

just input of hearing but no output. Using this game method, students can develop their capacity of reaction and words distinction.

Case 6:

Game name: See who is fast.

Game time: 5 minutes.

Before the game, teacher would explain the test papers and organize such competitive games when encountering exercisable words. A collective noun would be written on the blackboard first and then students would be allowed to come up to write specific nouns freely. Words that have been written cannot be repeated.

During the game, the listed words were: furniture, transportation, sports and so on.

After the game, teacher should correct the wrong words and read all the words on the blackboard.

Advantages: Enlarge the vocabulary of students in a certain field of area.

Highlights: Since everyone had to write and the words that have been written cannot be repeated, so all students were very active and eager to try.

Case 7:

Game name: You call, I read.

Game time: 7 minutes.

Before the game, number each students.

During the game, after numbering each students, the teacher would say a number at random. And then, the first sentence of the text would be read by the student with the according number. After reading. the student would say a number at random similarly, and the process would be repeated until the last sentence be read.

After the game, correct the pronunciation

Advantages: Due to the unknown of the next reader, the whole class was kept in a state of highly attention, so that they can focus on the listening to the text reading. Compared with the traditional text reading, it is more fun and absorbing.

Case 8:

Game Name: Seven.

Before the game:

1. Review the numbers from 1 to 100.

2. Rules interpretation. Counting numbers from 1 to 100 one by one, students should clap their hands instead of saying the number out loud, when it comes to the numbers 7-related (such as numbers with 7: 17, 57 and so on, or multiples of 7: 14, 49, etc.). If one student makes mistake, he or she would be punished (singing a Chinese song, or reading a Chinese poem).

During the game, several students often made a slip of tongue, so they always had to perform. Besides, I also participated in and made a slip of tongue. After that, I sang a Chinese song that appeared in the recently watched movie by the whole class.

After the game, the teacher can count the number from one to one hundred with students again.

The highlight of implementation: teacher involvement increased the fun and tension in the entire game. But in fact, it is obvious that students were more expecting teachers to perform after “mistakes” in the game.

The problems that may occur during the implementation of the game and the possible countermeasures. The establishment of the game method in teaching is relatively short in China and has not yet formed a completed system. Therefore, in the process of its implementation, many problems would inevitably occur. For the cases listed above, it is advisable to discuss the problems that had been arisen or may be arisen in the game, and propose some possible solutions for improvements.

Case 1:

Problems: Because some of the words in the tongue twister were beyond the current level of students, in that we need to spend some time on the explanation. At the same time, students needed some time to digest. Therefore, using too much time or students being timid to try might occur.

Possible solutions: Teacher can adopt some tongue twisters without new words, or use the learnt words to create the tongue twister which suits the level of students.

Case 2:

Problems: Due to the large amount of new words in the text, and the fact that the students did not review in time, a lot of words learnt were forgotten, which led to the situation when sometimes the sentences

created were completely out of the usage of words and logic. Secondly, during the game, many students were still in a state of not understanding the rules of the game which made the repeated explanation become a necessity. Besides, there were many other students playing mobile phone, when another student was making a sentence. As a result, the final story was no longer with a storyline, but a simple lineless combination, and lost the fun of the game itself.

Improvement plan: The game may not suit beginners to play, and should be implemented at a higher level.

Case 3:

Problems: Students had a dispute over the line between vegetables and fruits. Moreover, due to the rules of first-hand up, first-say, there was a phenomenon in which several students raised their hands at the same time which made the teacher difficult to decide the order of them to describe. During the game, due to the limited level of students, sometimes the description was not satisfactory, so some students used drawing to help. Furthermore, when students felt that their vocabulary was not enough to describe some details, they may begin to use Russian for many cases. Under such circumstances, I can only emphasize the rule “Chinese-Only” again and again.

Improvement plan: Make rule, like “Chinese speaking only” in advance and according to “punishment”.

Case 4:

Problems: There might be some students who are too shy to perform in front of the class (but this kind of situation didn't appear in my class).

Improvement plans: Teacher can invite those more introverted students to perform in the middle of the line, so that they would either have the pressure of being the “pioneer” or “the last one”.

Case 5:

Problems: When it comes to the lower part of the body, the students sitting in the rear can not participate in the game, because of the blocking of their sight.

Improvement plan: Teacher can have drawing on the blackboard instead of pointing at his or her own body.

Case 6:

Problems: Because everyone was free to write on the blackboard, it

was easy to lead to chaos and injury. Besides, the students in the rear thought that the students in the front had more edge since they were closer to the blackboard.

Improvement plan: Teacher can adopt the method of numbering lottery, so that everyone has the opportunity to write and it would also help to keep the class in order.

Case 7:

Problems: There was a situation that completely out of my expectations which made the game lose the original purpose.

At the beginning of the game, everyone was very excited and cautious. However, after being familiar with everyone's number, some students repeatedly said the numbers of their friends out of mischievous psychology. In the end, students who can read the text only clustered in a small group, while other students were left out and ignored.

Improvement plan: The number should be randomly selected by the teacher, so that both the suspense and the fairness can be guaranteed.

Case 8:

Problems: Because the students who made slip of tongue outnumbered the Chinese songs and poems studied in the previous period, in that some students chose to sing Russian songs as “punishment”.

Improvement plan: Students who choose to sing Russian songs or have performance that are not related to Chinese should explain the contents of the performance in Chinese after the performance.

Conclusions. The game methods mentioned above are all from the real cases of the author's personal teaching experience, which would provide readers with some references. But in the implementation, there are still many aspects that must be paid attention to. First of all, teacher must take into account the Chinese level of the students and clarify the rules of the game in advance in the design and implementation of the game method. Secondly, it is necessary to distinguish the boundaries between “learning” and “playing”, and not to make the game become the leading subject in the teaching, but to serve the teaching itself. However, to integrate knowledge into the game skilfully is still difficult. In addition, the time arrangement of the game, the simplicity of the rules, the frequency of game implementation, also need to be taken into account.

In general, the primary purpose of the game method is to consolidate the knowledge that is learned, and the second is to spark the enthusiasm of the students and activate the atmosphere in the classroom. In addition, it is necessary to pay attention to the fairness and purpose of the game, so that students can develop their cognitive, communication skill and improve their knowledge during the game at the same time.

In the implementation of the game, teachers should play a role in guiding and supervising. Teacher should keep a balance between the role of organizer, bystander, and even participant sometimes. As an organizer, teacher should consider the application of the game in the teaching before class in all respects. First, It should be taken into consideration that the purpose of the game, such as keeping the class in order, introducing new content, or reviewing and the teaching goals that should be completed.

Second, the time of the game should be planed. In the case that the game does not take up too much time in the class, students can enjoy leaning fully while having fun. Again, before the game, the teacher should use concise words to explain the rules of the game to the students. What's more, after the game, the teacher needs to summarize and reflect on the game in time to find out the pros and cons of the game and the likes and dislikes of the students, so as to design a game that is more in line with the needs of the class and the characteristics of the students. At the same time, those games that are not effective and even have a negative impact on students should be eliminated.

As a bystander, teacher should mainly play a role in maintaining the order during the implementation of the game. In the case of excessive enthusiasm and neglect of the rules of the game, teacher should clam the students and emphasize the rules of the game in time, so as to ensure the continuance of the game. When students have some grammatical or verbal errors during the game, the teacher should not suddenly interrupt the game for the sake of accuracy, but summarize and correct the typical mistakes after the game. However, if uncontrollable situations occur during the game, and the teaching cannot be continued, the teacher should end the game in time and bring the students' attention back to the classroom.

In addition to organizers and bystanders, teacher can join the game in many cases. As a participant, the teacher can play a role model and

guide the students during the game, which is more beneficial to students' understanding of the rules of the game and the going on of the game. Moreover, the identity of such "participant" helps narrow the distance between teachers and students, making students feel that their teacher is also a part of them.

Perspectives of further research. The author hopes there will be more TCSL teachers adopt game method in the Chinese teaching to stimulate students or to consolidate what they have learnt. Besides, it is advisable to record the game implemented in the class which could provide other Chinese teachers with the value of study and references.

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