

Brief Analysis on the Application of Aesthetic Education in International Chinese Teaching

Kaiyue Zheng

Xi'an Shiyou University, Xi'an, Shaanxi 710065, China

Abstract: Aesthetic education is an important component of China's socialist education policy and an indispensable part of cultivating and creating new talents for socialist construction and development. China's education aims to nurture well-rounded individuals with comprehensive development in moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and labor education, where aesthetic education has always played a significant role. As early as the Zhou Dynasty in China, aesthetic education already existed, and on this fertile cultural soil of China, it has been subtly influencing the Chinese nation. In recent years, the international Chinese language education community has increasingly recognized the role of aesthetic education in Chinese language teaching, and it is playing an increasingly positive role in teaching Chinese to non-native speakers. This paper aims to focus on the research directions and achievements of aesthetic education in education, particularly in the field of international Chinese language teaching, in recent years. Drawing on my own experience in Chinese language teaching, I propose some specific strategies for applying aesthetic education to Chinese language teaching, attempting to identify some feasible and effective teaching methods to help Chinese language teachers incorporate the perspective of aesthetic education into their lesson preparation and teaching, making the curriculum more complete and engaging. At the same time, the perspective of aesthetic education can also be integrated into the classroom of Chinese language teaching, making the design and teaching of Chinese language courses more interesting and encouraging students to love learning Chinese.

Keywords: Aesthetic Education, Chinese International Education, Teaching Strategies, Teaching Methods.

1. The Present Situation of Aesthetic Education in China's Education

Some people believe that aesthetic education is simply art education. This view might be a common perception among those unfamiliar with education. When I asked friends and family not in the education field, they considered aesthetic education limited to school art and music courses. Even among the few primary and secondary school teachers I know, their understanding of aesthetic education remains somewhat vague. Before studying this discipline, I only knew it as aesthetic education. Through learning and in-depth research, I've developed a clearer understanding. This shows that China still has a long way to go in popularizing aesthetic education. Fortunately, in recent years, the government and society have increasingly prioritized it. From kindergarten through undergraduate and graduate education, aesthetic education courses have gained significant weight. In early January, the Ministry of Education issued the "Notice on Fully Implementing the School Aesthetic Education Infiltration Action[2]," proposing to enhance students' aesthetic literacy through "Eight Major Initiatives[2]." By 2027, China's school aesthetic education will achieve substantial improvements in both breadth and depth.

2. The Meaning and Significance of Aesthetic Education

Aesthetic education and aesthetics are closely related, but aesthetic education is not equivalent to aesthetics. In his article "Aesthetic Education," Cai Yuanpei proposed: "Aesthetic education applies aesthetic theories to education with the purpose of cultivating emotions[1]." He believed that aesthetic education involves applying aesthetic theories to education to nurture the emotions of students. He also stated:

"Aesthetic education complements intellectual education to achieve the completion of moral education[1]." Aesthetic education and intellectual education mutually support each other, providing assistance for moral education. Wang Guowei first advocated "aesthetic education" in his 1903 article "On the Purpose of Education[5]," defining it as "mental education[5]." He believed that aesthetic education is an inner cultivation of human nature. Li Changfeng and Yao Chuanzhi mentioned four definitions of "aesthetic education" in their "Introduction to Aesthetic Education": "Aesthetic education is an auxiliary education subordinate to moral, intellectual, and physical education[5]." "Aesthetic education is the education of aesthetic theories[5]." "Aesthetic education is the education of beautiful images[5]." "Aesthetic education is emotional education[5]." These four perspectives explained aesthetic education from different angles, but they were relatively singular and did not comprehensively define "aesthetic education." Building on Cai Yuanpei's foundation, they refined the definition of aesthetic education: "Aesthetic education is guided by aesthetic theories and primarily uses image-based education to cultivate human emotions[1]." Emotional education constitutes the most profound essence of aesthetic education, which fundamentally distinguishes it from moral, intellectual, and physical education. The author posits that aesthetic education cultivates students' capacity to perceive and appreciate beauty, as well as their ability to create beautiful objects. As an interdisciplinary field with multidisciplinary characteristics, aesthetic education requires cross-disciplinary collaboration. Its research findings can be applied to related academic domains, making it a discipline deeply intertwined with our professional and daily lives.

The significance of aesthetic education is also rich and important. Mr. Cai Yuanpei, in his work "Aesthetic Education and Life[1]," believed that the purpose of aesthetic education

is to cultivate individuals with noble sentiments and a pursuit of life's value for the nation. In "An Introduction to Aesthetic Education," it mentioned the meaning of aesthetic education: "Aesthetic education can foster a healthy and rich emotional world, promoting the all-round development of individuals; it helps develop comprehensive thinking, making education complete; and it can advance the construction of both material and spiritual civilization in society[3]." The author believes that the latter interpretation of the significance of aesthetic education is relatively objective and comprehensive. With the enhancement of China's comprehensive national strength and the expansion of its global influence, the requirements for talents needed by the nation and society in the future will become increasingly higher. Under the development of the "Belt and Road" initiative, building a "community with a shared future for mankind" imposes higher demands on our education, and aesthetic education plays a crucial role in this process. As an international Chinese language teacher, the author believes that the role of aesthetic education in teaching Chinese as a foreign language is also extremely important. By correctly and effectively integrating aesthetic theories into the curriculum during the teaching process, it not only enhances students interest in learning Chinese but also cultivates the moral sentiments of international students, reflecting the disciplinary positioning of Chinese as an international language education as a "language education discipline." Therefore, aesthetic education in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The role is not to be ignored.

3. The Current Research Status of Aesthetic Education in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

Through systematic searches using the keywords "aesthetic education" and "Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) teaching", the author identified a limited number of studies exploring aesthetic education's application in CFL pedagogy. These include research on teaching methods and strategies for students from specific countries, studies integrating new media with aesthetic education, and investigations into the role of aesthetics in CFL teaching methodologies. While some of these studies demonstrate innovative approaches, they lack in-depth analysis of how aesthetic education can be systematically integrated throughout the CFL teaching process. Key questions remain: How can aesthetic education be embedded in lesson planning? How can teachers

incorporate aesthetic elements into classroom instruction to influence students? How should post-class activities and assignments be designed to reflect aesthetic education in students' daily lives? These research areas represent significant untapped potential in the field of CFL pedagogy, with substantial academic value and practical implications.

4. The Application of Aesthetic Education in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

4.1. The Application of Aesthetic Education in the Teaching Design of Chinese as a Foreign Language

Teaching design, as a fundamental and crucial component of education, reflects a teacher's pedagogical expertise, instructional techniques, and knowledge depth. Its most direct manifestations are lesson preparation and lesson plan development[4]. The preparation process begins with analyzing teaching materials. As the carrier of curriculum content, proper understanding of materials helps educators identify key concepts and challenges, enabling them to develop effective strategies in lesson planning. How can aesthetic education be integrated into this process? Teachers must cultivate an eye for beauty, learning to appreciate aesthetic elements across materials—from illustrations and typography to interactive games and text formatting. Illustrations, for instance, serve dual purposes: they visually enhance the material while supporting teaching objectives. For Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) instructors, incorporating illustrations during preparation can stimulate concrete cognition in students, significantly aiding their character recognition and semantic comprehension. Take the HSK textbook as an example: In Lesson 1 of HSK2 titled "September Travel to Beijing," students must master two characters—"wei" (for) and "ye" (also). For students from Indo-European-speaking countries...Square Chinese characters pose a significant learning challenge for many beginners, who often insist on recognizing characters without writing them, believing that even basic recognition is difficult enough, let alone writing. The HSK textbook excels in addressing this aspect in its elementary curriculum. It places the oracle bone script style of Chinese characters at the forefront of simplified characters and includes an evolution chart, as shown in the figure below:



Figure 1. The Character “为” [6]

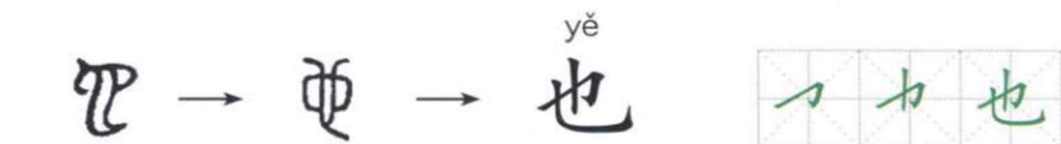


Figure 2. The Character “也” [6]

When studying the teaching material, the teacher can compare the oracle bone script style of Chinese characters

with the actual objects in the lesson plan design, so that students can find the characteristics of the shape of the

Chinese characters, which can help students to reduce the fear of learning Chinese characters.

For example, when teaching the content of a text, students can first observe the illustrations in the text. Teachers and students can then engage in some simple dialogues about the illustrations based on them. This can be used during the introduction of the text to help students quickly focus and enter the course learning. Some Chinese textbooks for teenagers contain more aesthetic elements compared to adult textbooks. For instance, internationally popular textbooks like *Easy Steps To Chinese* and *YCT* feature rich illustrations and photos related to China culture, which are all aesthetic education elements we can consider during the lesson preparation stage.

4.2. The Application of Aesthetic Education in the Organization and Management of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

The success of classroom teaching hinges on whether teachers can properly manage the teacher-student relationship in class, whether they consistently maintain a leading role, and whether they stimulate students initiative and enthusiasm. Therefore, effective classroom organization and management are crucial guarantees for the smooth progression of a lesson and the successful achievement of its objectives. Incorporating aesthetic education into classroom management can help teachers better oversee the class. In teaching Chinese as a foreign language, teachers often encounter various unexpected situations. The students we face may come from different countries with diverse cultural backgrounds, but we believe that the human perception of beauty is universal. The language teachers use in class should be elegant and concise, with an appropriate speaking pace, allowing students to appreciate the charm of China's language and writing. Teachers should pose questions succinctly and clearly, offer encouragement when correcting students linguistic errors, and maintain a smile throughout, creating a comfortable and secure classroom environment that helps alleviate students fear of challenges.

4.3. The Application of Aesthetic Education in Teaching Aids

During the teaching process, Chinese language teachers may use various media, teaching tools, or materials based on the content of the text. These teaching tools are the most direct embodiments of beauty and better capable of carrying the function of aesthetic education. When designing teaching courseware, teachers should think more about how to make it attract students and help them learn. This requires teachers to integrate the concept of aesthetic education into the courseware, reflecting its aesthetic appeal, so that students are subtly influenced by beauty while learning. When designing teaching courseware, I particularly enjoy using China-style courseware templates. I believe that when students learn Chinese, they see China elements in the courseware, allowing them to experience the beauty of China culture. For the font in the courseware, I use a unified typeface, generally in regular script, because regular script is the most standardized Chinese character in calligraphy, helping students recognize these characters and appreciate the formal beauty of China characters. The images in the courseware are all China classical elements and China classic colors. China style inherently carries classical beauty, which is very classic and not easily outdated. Perhaps years later, when I take out this

teaching courseware again, I can still savor the colors, fonts, and classic beauty of China style. When making some teaching aids, such as word cards and character cards, Aesthetic elements should also be incorporated. The font design of vocabulary cards should embody standardized elegance, while image selection should prioritize simplicity. Colors must complement each other—being visually striking with clear color recognition without being overly flashy, which could cause visual fatigue for students. Since these cards are meant for repeated use, excessive ornamental elements may ultimately hinder learning effectiveness.

4.4. The Application of Aesthetic Education in the Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language includes not only classroom learning but also extracurricular acquisition, and we are increasingly emphasizing students acquisition of Chinese and China culture through extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities should be diverse, interesting, and aesthetically pleasing. Aesthetic education plays a significant role in this process, permeating every aspect of extracurricular activities and genuinely influencing every Chinese learner. Some international schools organize a China culture-related extracurricular activity each semester, and such activities are well-received by students. In China culture extracurricular activities, various aesthetic courses such as music, dance, painting, and poetry are combined with China culture, spreading the beauty of China and allowing more and more foreigners to experience the beauty of China culture. For example, the exhibition of Chinese cultural works. This activity requires each student in every class to create a traditional Chinese handicraft or painting, and the students works are displayed collectively across the school. The most popular works are selected and displayed in the schools cultural gallery for an extended period, even becoming a cultural symbol of the school. Through this process, students personally participate in the China culture atmosphere, not only gaining knowledge about China culture but also acquiring a skill and cultivating their sentiments. And all the teachers and students in the school, all aesthetic education has planted a seed of China culture in the hearts of foreign students. For example, festival cultural activities are also important activities for aesthetic education in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. China has many traditional festivals, each with its own unique characteristics, among which the Spring Festival is the most popular. When the Spring Festival approaches, many international schools organize activities related to the festival, such as organizing students to make dumplings, write couplets, and make lanterns. When teachers teach students to make dumplings, students can learn about China's dietary customs, and the round and beautiful shape of dumplings can also help them feel the unity, love for harmony, and desire for a perfect life of the Chinese people. When writing Spring Festival couplets, students can appreciate the art of Chinese characters and symmetry, as well as the optimistic attitude and longing for a better life of the Chinese people. In this process, students will gradually learn to tolerate others, live peacefully with them, and look forward to the future with hope.

4.5. The Application of Aesthetic Education in Training Teachers of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language

Chinese language teachers in China are the spokespersons of China and the image ambassadors of Chinese culture. Every action of Chinese language teachers in the classroom influences learners' perception of China. Chinese language teachers should not only possess intrinsic aesthetic knowledge but also embody beauty, even unique Chinese beauty, in their external image. When training Chinese language teachers, it is essential to continuously enhance their cultural literacy, improve their aesthetic sense, and elevate their external image. Currently, most teacher-training institutions in China offer aesthetic education courses and cultural etiquette courses, which help cultivate Chinese language teachers with a professional and cultural image. As a Chinese language teacher, one must always be mindful of their words and actions, as every move may impact the image of their country, requiring extra attention during teaching. However, this does not mean every Chinese language teacher needs to be overly cautious in speech and behavior. The individuality of Chinese language teachers is also a form of beauty, allowing students to recognize a more open and comprehensive China. The cultivation of Chinese language teachers' image cannot be generalized.

5. Conclusion

There is still much unexplored territory in the application of aesthetic education in Chinese as a foreign language teaching, which is well worth further investigation. In the

future, Chinese as a foreign language education will place greater emphasis on teachers' comprehensive qualities, and international Chinese teaching will increasingly require new-type teachers with all-round development in morality, intelligence, physique, aesthetics, and labor. The future world will also increasingly value the aesthetic education of international students. The teaching of Chinese and the dissemination of China's culture increasingly require aesthetic education to play a role. As an international Chinese teacher, learning aesthetic education and actively integrating its concepts into practical Chinese teaching will greatly enhance the depth of Chinese teaching, making this profound language no longer difficult and enabling Chinese learners and enthusiasts around the world to love this beautiful language even more.

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