

Mozi's Educational Philosophies and Their Implications for Contemporary Pedagogy in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language

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Abstract: Mozi is an esteemed philosopher in ancient China who has been recognized for his distinctive pedagogical views which stand out in the long course of history, earning him widespread acclaim. Emphasizing pragmatism, feasibility, and inclusivity, his educational principles have imparted significant insights for contemporary educators. This article summarizes several practical and feasible methods which can be applied in the course of Teaching Chinese as a Second Language according to Mozi's educational philosophy, offering fresh perspectives and strategic recommendations for modern instructional methods in this field.

Keywords: Mozi; Educational Philosophy; Teaching Chinese as a Second Language.

1. Introduction

Mozi, also known as Mo-tzu or Mo Di, was a distinguished thinker and educator during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (BC470-BC476) of ancient China and was the founder of the Mohist school. His intellectual contributions spanned a vast range of disciplines, including politics, education, philosophy, and science. He established the first comprehensive school for civilian in human history that integrated arts, sciences, military strategy, and engineering, producing a multitude of talented individuals. Mozi advocated for the roles of practicality, instructor competence, environmental influence, and pedagogical strategies in education, and many of his educational theories, principles, and concepts remain relevant and offer invaluable enlightenment even in contemporary times. With the global surge in interest in the Chinese language, "the Mandarin fever", Teaching Chinese as a Second language (TCSL) has witnessed expansive growth and popularity, leading numerous countries to incorporate Chinese courses into their national education systems. Mozi's educational principles, such as teaching students in accordance with their aptitude, selecting teaching contents based on students' acceptability, the influence of milieu on individual nature, and the emphasis on action-based practical learning, offer significant lessons for modern TCSL instruction.

2. Literature Review

In the research "On Mo-tse Educational Thoughts and Practical Significance", Liu Jia and Jin Guizhen (2005), through a comprehensive reading of Mozi's writings, assert that the pedagogical philosophy embodied within the Mohist thought offers considerable insights for the contemporary socio-economics, politics, and educational milieu. They acknowledge the significance of Mozi's pragmatic educational philosophies within the canon of traditional Chinese pedagogical thought. Similarly, Li Guangfu and Guo Huai (2005), in their analysis titled "Brief Analysis on Mo-tse's View on Education", highlight the pivotal role of Mozi's educational framework in Chinese educational history. They emphasize that Mozi's educational perspectives, whether

pertaining to the philosophical underpinnings, objectives, content, methodology, or principles of instruction, are comprehensive and well-integrated.

In her "The Distinctiveness of Mozi's Educational Thoughts and Its Implications for Modern Higher Education" Liu Liqin (2010) also affirms Mozi's unique perspectives in various aspects such as educational objectives, targets, and overarching philosophy. Drawing upon the advocated ideals of promoting educational equity, innovative spirit of "elucidating and creating", the central role of educators in instruction, and the cultivation of innovative capabilities and learning enthusiasm, Liu offers theoretical foundations and pedagogical insights for contemporary higher education.

In another study "Brief Discussion on Mozi's Educational Thoughts," Zhang Lixin (2007) emphasizes the modern significance of Mozi's educational ideas, which is not only important to tailor education to each student's individuality, interests, and aspirations but also to emphasize practical application and align one's words with actions. What's more, Li Ti (2010) expounds on his "Brief Analysis of Mozi's Educational Thoughts" that Mozi is a great practitioner who focuses on cultivating students to apply what they have learned. The Mohist school is characterized by earnest practice what they advocate, and their teachings involve more than just gatherings for discussions; it also involves traveling to different states and persuading rulers through actual actions to realize their ideals.

The principle of "tailoring education to individual needs" refers to teachers starting from the actual conditions of students and selecting teaching methods that are suitable for different students based on their knowledge level, learning ability, and personality traits. In her study "The Educational Thoughts of Tailoring Education to Individual Needs in 'The Analects of Confucius' and its Application in Teaching Chinese as a Second Language," Zhang Lu (2013) proposes the application and referential significance of the principle of tailoring education to individual needs in TCSL. Zhang believes that the cultural customs and language backgrounds that students have been exposed to since childhood can result in differences in their levels of acceptance and abilities when learning Chinese. By adopting different teaching methods

according to the students' own characteristics, educators can enhance their learning efficiency and knowledge level.

Furthermore, Zhao Houxian and Zhao Xia (2002), in their work "On Principles of Culture Teaching," emphasize the importance of cultural teaching. In teaching practice, this involves enhancing teachers' understanding of the cultural differences between the East and the West and their intercultural communication awareness to reduce cultural conflicts. Additionally, educators should adopt appropriate teaching strategies based on students' cultural backgrounds and cultural characteristics, cultivating their affection and interest in Chinese culture.

Numerous theoretical foundations can attest to the practicality, feasibility, and reference significance of Mozi's educational thoughts in teaching, which also provides useful insights and suggestions for TCSL.

3. Mozi's Principles of Teaching Students in Accordance with Their Aptitude and Selecting Teaching Contents Based on Students' Acceptability and Inspiration on TCSL

In his "Mozi Gengzhu" Mozi asserts, "For the sake of righteousness, those proficient in debate should engage in debate, those skilled in recitation should recite, and those capable of action should take action. Only through such specialization can objectives be truly achieved." This underscores the foundational and essential role of leveraging individual competencies in the realization of any endeavor, which emphasizes that excellence is attained only when individuals harness their inherent strengths and talents to the fullest. Mozi further posits that students possess finite energy; hence, they should calibrate their learning to align with their capacities and acceptability, which is a principle that is also germane to pedagogical practices. Effective teaching mandates an assessment of a student's baseline- factoring in their cognitive reception, age, and knowledge background. This approach facilitates a curriculum that is attuned to a student's nature and developmental pattern. It is imperative to resist the allure to overwhelm students with a large quantity of knowledge in pursuit of immediate teaching outcomes, as such an approach can be counterproductive. Educators should aspire to be both the discoverers of each student's unique prowess and the catalysts in actualizing their latent potential. Tailoring pedagogical strategies to resonate with the distinctive characteristics of each student can optimize learning efficiency, bolster interest, and enhance knowledge acquisition.

In the classes of TCSL, where students hail from diverse countries and cultural background, there is an inherent discrepancy in learning aptitudes and competencies. Pedagogical emphasis should be dynamically adjusted to cater to the varied learning objectives of these students. For instance, students oriented towards business Chinese may benefit more from advanced conversational nuances, on the other hand, those with academic pursuits should secure a solid grounding in foundational elements like Pinyin for subsequent in-depth learning and comprehension. For students with zero prior knowledge, the primary pedagogical objective should be fostering an affinity for the Chinese language and its rich cultural tapestry, thereby promoting

their learning motivation. Mozi's pedagogical paradigm frequently incorporated analogies from quotidian and societal experiences, aiming to maximize the practicality of the instructional content. This not only invigorates student engagement but also catalyzes critical thinking and encourages real-world applications. Therefore, in order to improve teaching efficiency and effectiveness, it behooves educators have a keen eye to adopt a discerning perspective, calibrating teaching methodologies to the nuanced requirements of each student's individual circumstances and learning needs, buttressed by contextually relevant examples. During this instructional journey, a constant recalibration of curriculum pacing and rigor is pivotal, contingent on students' comprehension and adaptability, ensuring the most desirable outcomes.

4. Mozi's Theory of Influence of Milieu on Individual Nature and Inspiration on TCSL

In "Mozi Suoran," an analogy is drawn using dyed silk. He articulates the concept that "Human nature is akin to uncolored silk, when dyed in blue, it turns blue; when dyed in yellow, it turns yellow". This postulates that human nature, analogous to silk, is malleable and shaped by extrinsic influences. In other words, the essence of this metaphor is that one's milieu perpetually molds their character, developmental trajectory, educational outcomes, worldview, values, and cultural affiliations. This perspective resonates with the adage, "He that lies down with dogs must rise up with flea". Towards the end of the 20th century, scholars such as Boysson-Bardies et al. proposed the Hypothesis of Early Interaction, underscoring the pivotal role linguistic environments play in language development. This school of thought finds parallels in the theories championed by Pavlov, Watson and other behaviorists, which emphasize the profound influence of external environments. Throughout history and across cultures, numerous scholars from various culture have fortified this perspective with a plethora of theoretical constructs and empirical evidence.

In the realm of TCSL, the creation and selection of the right educational ambiance also play a crucial role. First, educators can immerse students in a Chinese-rich milieu, for instance, by establishing "Chinese Corners" in classrooms, availing Chinese literature for continuous perusal, adorning classrooms with classical Chinese art and calligraphy, and interspersing Chinese music during breaks. Furthermore, integrating celebrations of traditional Chinese festivals into the curriculum can engross students and experience traditional Chinese culture. Through such unconscious exposures, it inadvertently hones their linguistic intuition and vocabulary to some extent. Second, it is pivotal to foster environments conducive to active linguistic interactions, prompting students to vocalize their learnings. Educators can facilitate classroom dialogues utilizing newly-acquired grammatical structures and encourage the pragmatic application of these linguistic constructs in real-world settings. For instance, during lessons related to shopping, contextual scenarios like convenience stores, apparel outlets, and supermarkets, which students frequently patronize, can be incorporated. This approach not only galvanizes students to employ the acquired language in genuine interactions but also refines their linguistic precision and communicative prowess through recurrent engagements.

5. Mozi's Action-oriented Practical Principle and Its Inspiration for TCSL

In "Mozi Xiushen", Mozi emphasizes on the primacy of action, the integration of knowledge and practice, and the application of learning. He postulates, "Even if a scholar has acquired knowledge, it is his actions that serve as the foundation". This suggests that no matter how erudite an individual may be, practical implementation remains paramount. What's more, he also asserts, "Without strong resolve, wisdom cannot be attained; without honest words, actions will not bear fruit". He deeply valued the outcomes of practice, and not only did he advocate "sitting and speaking", but he also stressed the importance of "standing up and taking action". In other words, he holds the belief that knowledge truly manifests its significance only when applied in reality and through personal practice. Consequently, educators must foster students' capability to implement their learning in real-world contexts, which facilitates the continuous discovery and refinement of knowledge gaps, thereby achieving the most desirable educational outcomes. Mozi's renowned "Three Criteria" method, which necessitates that speech must be grounded in origins, be thoroughly examined, and put into practice, also underscores his demand for students to grasp the essence of matters and place importance on practical utility.

In the context of TCSL, educators should ardently adhere to the principle of practice, amalgamating both in-class and out-of-class engagements to fulfill comprehensive pedagogical objectives. Imbuing the teaching process with practical elements is pivotal to assist students in applying that they have learned. Primarily, the emphasis should be placed on relevance and specificity of the curriculum content. Therefore, educators should impart linguistic elements and vocabulary that students can utilize in genuine dialogues and daily scenarios. Furthermore, Chinese language educators can introduce colloquial expressions and everyday phrases, especially beneficial for beginners, to mitigate potential cultural conflicts and communicative challenges. Educational institutions can further enrich the experience by organizing extracurricular activities where foreign students participate in Chinese clubs or engage in culturally emblematic excursions, such as visiting museum and historical site, immersing them in the Chinese cultural milieu, and personally experience Chinese culture. Ultimately, educators must advocate students for extensive practice, encouraging them to frequently utilize their Chinese language skills, bolstering their communicative proficiency and spoken fluency. Within classroom settings, they can facilitate dialogic exercises, promoting peer-to-peer interactions using learned language structures. Outside the classroom, students should be encouraged to engage in conversations with locals, embracing misunderstandings as

they arise, for consistent practice ultimately catalyzes cognitive growth and progression.

6. Summary and Prospects

Mozi's educational philosophy is both profound and extensive, with many of its core principles warranting detailed examination and absorption. Educators should not only tailor their instruction to suit individual student needs, but also encourage the integration of knowledge with practical application, embodying the principle of learning for the sake of utility. Meanwhile, there is a need to recognize and harness the positive influences of the milieu. These notions offer valuable insights and lessons for the ongoing development and refinement of contemporary instruction in TCSL.

This study posits that the pedagogical perspectives of Mozi to some extent offer innovative insights and methodologies for TCSL, however, it is also crucial to recognize the inherent limitations and to perpetually refine these methodologies. The author believes that a fundamental principle that should underpin such educational endeavors is ensuring equity; students of all backgrounds must be accorded equal opportunities to learn Chinese. Additionally, the curricular content must resonate with real-world applications, emphasizing on practicality, such as everyday communication and business dialogues, caters to the tangible needs of students. Group cooperation is another dimension that warrants emphasis. Incorporating collaborative group activities can foster student interactions, invigorating the learning experience. A salient challenge in curriculum design is addressing the inevitable cultural disparities among students, therefore, devising strategies to integrate these variances to facilitate effective dissemination of pedagogical ideologies remains a challenge. Another challenge lies in striking an optimal balance between traditional teaching methodologies and modern technological aids, ensuring that students acquire practical linguistic skills while also gaining a deep understanding of Chinese culture and values. This equilibrium is pivotal for adapting to the contemporary demands of TCSL.

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