

A Case Study on the Application of Socio-cultural Theory in International Chinese Language Classrooms

-- An Example of the Teaching Practice of Learning Chinese with Teachers

Xiaotian Zhang

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

Abstract: Research on sociocultural theory in second language acquisition is common, but there are few concrete methodological results for frontline teachers. In this paper, we first summarize the development of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as the theoretical support of this paper; secondly, we use the sociocultural theory as the guide to design the teaching of the lesson "Learning Chinese with a Teacher", and describe in detail the implementation of the teaching process. Finally, it analyzes how to apply such a basic theory as socio-cultural theory to the practice of language teaching in a more grounded way from the perspective of teachers.

Keywords: Sociocultural Theory; International Chinese Language Education; Case Study; Teaching Practice.

1. Introduction

1.1. Significance of the Study

Theoretical significance: With the rapid development of Chinese language education in Thailand, there have been numerous studies related to the aspects of Chinese language classrooms. And after investigation and research, it is found that most of the current studies are related to the exploration of pedagogies, teachers' or students' studies, and so on. Sociocultural theory has been emphasized by academics since Vygotsky (1978) proposed it and Lantolf (2006) combined it with second language acquisition. Its direction in the teaching of English as a second language has developed rapidly and presented numerous research results of direct instructive significance. However, there is still a gap in the research on the teaching of Chinese as a second language, so this study summarizes Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and second language acquisition, and further improves the theory of socio-cultural theory in Chinese classroom practice on the basis of research results.

Practical significance: This paper's study of the application of basic theories to teaching practice will have a certain impact on international Chinese language teachers' ability to improve classroom efficiency. The role of theory is to be applied to practice, and the countermeasures proposed in this paper on the use of socio-cultural theory in international Chinese language classrooms will provide some theoretical support on cognition for international Chinese language teaching in the future, and also provide some specific operational guidance for international Chinese language teachers, so as to improve the quality of teaching in international Chinese language classrooms, maximize the potential of students, and provide more Chinese language talents for the international community. The Chinese language teaching in the international Chinese language classroom will be improved in order to maximize the potential of students and provide more Chinese language talents for the international community.

1.2. Background and Status of the Study

(1) Background of the study

As China's comprehensive national strength continues to rise, the development of the Chinese language is also on the rise. Just for the international Chinese language volunteers of the Sino-Foreign Language Exchange and Cooperation Center, nearly 1,600 volunteers are sent to all over the world every year. Volunteers to Thailand account for the majority of the total number of volunteers, so the study of Chinese language teaching in Thailand is very necessary. Since I came to Cheng Yi Trilingual School in Thailand, I have been busy adapting to the life and teaching, and at the same time, I have also found many strengths and weaknesses in Chinese teaching in the school. For example, the school emphasizes Chinese language, and the IECP class has six Chinese lessons per week compared to four lessons per week in the regular class. The school also provides a targeted way for Chinese and Thai teachers to work together for this type of class. However, there are some general problems in terms of classroom teaching. For example, classroom discipline is difficult to maintain, students' Chinese language proficiency varies, and students' interest in learning varies according to their learning goals.

When thinking and reflecting on the semester's practice, we found that the students' interest and learning goals in the classroom directly affect the students' learning effect, and combined with the socio-cultural theories proposed by Vygotsky, which mentioned the core theories of mediation, internalization, and zone of nearest development (ZPD) have a guiding significance for the development of the teaching and learning of Chinese as a Second Language (CSL) and this discipline. The core theories of mediation, internalization, ZPD and so on are of great significance to the development of teaching Chinese as a second language. In order to improve the quality of our teaching and better apply the theoretical foundation to practical teaching, this paper carries out an all-around teaching design for the third lesson of Chinese Language (Primary Class) (Book 4), "Learning Chinese with Teachers", under the guidance of socio-cultural theories, so as to analyze and summarize the methodology of socio-cultural

theories for the teaching of Chinese as a second language in the international context.

(2) Status of research

Socio-cultural theory was proposed by Vygotsky, and its core idea is that the lower psychology of human beings develops into higher psychological functions through social activities, mediation, internalization, and so on. It belongs to cultural psychology in psychology, while in linguistics it is called socio-cultural theory. Since the 20th century, a large number of studies based on socio-cultural theory have appeared in the international community. Vygotsky himself has more than 10 books and more than 270 academic papers as well as many academic reports. Its social school in the field of second language acquisition has experienced continuous development and integration since its birth, and he has been in disagreement with another school of second language acquisition, the cognitive school. However, controversy tends to promote the development of things more, so for the research on the application of socio-cultural theories in second language acquisition, both at home and abroad in recent years have achieved good research results. Many scholars at home and abroad have engaged in heated discussions. Some discuss the guiding role of socio-cultural theories from the perspective of teachers, teaching materials, teaching modes and other teaching elements; some start from the theoretical composition of socio-cultural theories and talk about the specific application of theories such as the zone of nearest development, internalization and so on in international Chinese language teaching; and most of the scholars comb through the relevant research lineage and development results, with a view to providing convenience for the later researchers. However, there are still some problems that need to be solved, for example, most of the results of this study mainly focus on the acquisition of English as a second language, while there are still fewer and shallower studies on the acquisition of Chinese as a second language. Starting from the domestic and foreign research results in the past five years, we can roughly get the following: Domestic research can be roughly categorized into two types: empirical studies on second language acquisition from a socio-cultural perspective, and reviews and commentaries on related studies or writings. The first category includes Ding Yan's (2023) Study on Feedback Learning Input in the Perspective of Socio-Cultural Theory, He Lirong's (2023) Study on Teaching ESP Audiovisual Speaking Program in the Framework of Socio-Cultural Theory - Taking the Speaking Part as an Example, and Zhang Junna's (2020) Study on Second Language Classroom Teaching in the Perspective of Socio-Cultural Theory. The second category includes Xie Fang and Yu Xinxin's (2023) "A Review of Research on Second Language Acquisition under the Perspective of Socio-Cultural Theory", Zhang Xuan's (2022) and others' "A Review of Research on Second Language Motivation under the Perspective of Socio-Cultural Theory", and Sun Chuan et al.'s (2021) "Research on Reforms of English Teaching in Universities Based on Second Language Acquisition--A Review of the 'Introduction to the An Introduction to Socio-Cultural Theory'", and "A Review of <Lauterich's Handbook of Socio-Cultural Theory and Second and Development>" by Yaru Meng (2020). In recent years, there have also been some studies combining socio-cultural theory and Chinese language teaching, including Wang Xiaoqing's (2021) "Research on the Application of Socio-Cultural Theory in Teaching Chinese Vocabulary to Foreigners", Lin Qiao's

(2022) "Exploring the Design of the Online Teaching Platform for Chinese Second Language from Socio-Cultural Theory", and Lu Yuan's (2020) master's thesis, "Socio-Cultural Theory and Chinese International Education -- Taking Three Universities in Tianjin as an Example," and Zhao Xingxing's (2018) master's thesis, "Research on the Application of Socio-Cultural Theory in International Chinese Language Teaching--Taking Chiang Rai-Payao Area in Thailand as an Example. Relevant foreign studies started earlier, Lantolf first combined Vygotsky's social-network cultural theory with second language acquisition, and the studies in recent years roughly classified them into theoretical and empirical categories, the theoretical category includes YUICHI SUZUKI's (2019) et al. Optimization of Second Language Practices in the Classroom-Based on the Cognitive Psychology Perspective" by YUICHI SUZUKI (2019) and others, "A Review of Socio-Cultural Theories" by Mahbobeh Rahmatirad (2020), and "Socio-Cultural Theories and Second Language Development" by James P. Lantolf (2021) and others. Empirical studies such as Lianjiang Jiang's (2020) et al. article, "Feedback Practices of Second Language Writing Teachers in Response to Automated Writing Assessments: a Socio-Cultural Perspective," P Jamali Kivi's (2021) et al. study, "A Comparison of Teacher and Peer Scaffolding Impacts on English Language Learners' Incidental Vocabulary Acquisition and Reading Comprehension: a Socio-Cultural Perspective," Zul Shaharuddin bin setapa's (2023) study, Exploring the impact of socio-cultural context on English as a second language learners: a case study of Malaysian secondary school students.

2. Research Content and Methodology

2.1. Research

The core of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theories include: mediation - the connection between the subject of the learner and the object of the socio-cultural environment in which he or she is embedded, zone of proximal development - the distance between the actual level of development and the zone of potential development, internalization - the process by which individuals change their internal psychological mechanisms in social interactions. -The distance between the actual level of development and the zone of proximal development, and internalization - the process by which individuals change their internal psychological mechanisms in social communication. Therefore, this paper takes these three core concepts as the basis to support the teaching design, and elaborates and analyzes the teaching process and teaching reflection.

In this study, the third lesson "Learning Chinese with Teachers" from the elementary school edition (Book 4) of Chinese Language was selected, which is known to be a uniformly distributed textbook for the elementary school under the jurisdiction of the People's Education Committee in Northern Thailand. The fourth volume of the book corresponds to the fifth grade of the elementary school in Cheng Yai Trilingual Primary School in Cheng Yai Province, Thailand. The lesson focuses on the meaning and usage of the tenses "before and after".

2.2. Research Methodology

Literature analysis method: this paper delves into its own knowledge of several core concepts of socio-cultural theory based on the analysis of domestic and international literature

in the field of socio-cultural theory application and linguistics, so as to internalize them in the teaching design of this lesson.

Observational research method: This paper takes Thai beginner Chinese learners as the research object, and analyzes the value and application of socio-cultural theories to the teaching of Chinese as a second language by observing the effects and impact of their application in international Chinese classrooms.

Inductive research method: this paper describes and analyzes the case with a view to summarizing the methodology of the embodiment of core concepts related to socio-cultural theory in the Chinese as a foreign language classroom.

3. Case Descriptions

The target students of this class are 19 students in the fifth grade of Cheng Yi Trilingual Primary School in the north of Thailand. According to the statistics, 16 students in this class have passed the HSK1 examination a year ago and have basic listening and speaking skills in Chinese, and this class is taught by the Chinese teacher alone. This lesson is divided into two lessons, the first lesson focuses on vocabulary and Chinese characters, and the second lesson focuses on sentence patterns. teaching goal.

(1) Phonics: master the vocabulary of this lesson to hear and listen; try to talk freely about your ideals in Chinese.

(2) Vocabulary: Correct use of "before, after" to correctly express chronological order; knowledge of the other three types of vocabulary.

(3) Chinese character: Learn to write the radical "王" and the radical "力" and related character.

(4) Grammar: Master the key sentence patterns in this lesson.

(5) Culture: Learn about the changes in China in recent years through short films and discussions.

Lesson 1

(1) Pre-lesson introduction - interaction game

Greet each other with students before class to bring teachers and students closer together.

The game "Pick the Bomb" - students participate in the game by raising their hands and the teacher picks them, students pick a number from 1-9 to open the corresponding card and complete the task on the back of the card, and perform a show if they win the bomb. The content of the game "Bomb" in this lesson is set to review the words from the previous lesson, and when reviewing the words with specific sentences to deepen students' internalization of the sentence patterns from the previous lesson. For example, in the case of "Xi'an", encourage students to read it out and ask the class "Where is the teacher from?". The students are encouraged to read it out and are asked, "Where is the teacher from?", leading the students to say the declarative sentence, "Someone is from somewhere".

(2) Explanation and practice of new words (translation method, visualization method, etc.)

Based on the vocabulary mastery of the students in this class, the 16 words in this lesson were categorized into four groups during the pre-lesson preparation. They are core vocabulary (2), key vocabulary (5), extended vocabulary (4), and marginal vocabulary (5).

1) explain new or unfamiliar words

Taking into account the age characteristics of the students, the new words in this lesson are explained with the help of

various teaching methods. For example, the visualization method is used for nouns (homework, etc.) and verbs (business trip, etc.), and the translation and contextualization methods are used for adjectives (serious, etc.).

For example, when explaining the core vocabulary of this lesson, "before", the comparative method is used to compare and contrast it with the antonym "after". Different phrases are formed with pictures to help students understand and learn to use the antonym. For example, in the picture of the calendar for the current month (July), the date of the day (the 13th) is circled, and students are guided to say that the 8th is "five days ago" and the 15th is "two days later", based on their understanding of the meaning of "before and after". The students are guided to say that the 8th is "five days ago" and the 15th is "two days later" based on their understanding of the meaning of "before and after".

2) Word Expansion

On the basis of students' mastery of the core vocabulary, key vocabulary is taught. For example, the key vocabulary word "milk" is taught in a step-by-step manner: milk - drink milk - like to drink milk - I used to like to drink milk.

3) word drill

First, we use "flashcards" to review the core vocabulary and key words in this lesson. Secondly, we use sentence solitaire to practice the words.

(3) Teaching of Chinese characters (bias teaching method)

Practice writing the key radical "王" and the radical "力". Summarize the Chinese characters with the two radicals in the textbook, and let the students have a small competition - find the Chinese character with this radical among the Chinese characters they have learned. Find the Chinese character with the radical "王" and the radical "力".

(4) operation

In response to the lesson, the teacher leads the students through word-specific exercises.

Lesson 2

(1) Sentence Explanation (Inductive Approach)

1) Summarize sentence frames

Review "before and after" using the visual method, i.e. using the calendar picture from lesson one. Use the summarization method to learn two similar sentence patterns in this lesson. On the basis of students' ability to read and understand the text, guide them to summarize the similarities of each of the three groups of sentences in the text. For example, in the first group of sentences, students summarize the sentence pattern "Something/time + before/after, someone is doing something" according to the teacher's hints, and with specific sentence patterns students can create their own expressions on this basis.

2) Sentence Making Exercise

Sentences from the text are summarized with new sentences produced in class and a part of each sentence is blocked out to create a classroom game, in which each student is asked to participate in the game "Help the Bunny Go Home", which is designed to improve students' understanding and mastery of sentence patterns.

3) "My dream." This session was a free discussion with the theme of "When I grow up", and the vocational extension vocabulary was summarized in the PowerPoint to ensure the smoothness of the discussion. At the end of the discussion, both group reports and individual talks were used to summarize the discussion.

(2) Summary Review

The game "Twister", in which each student participates in

order, is a final review of the words of the lesson; the three sentence patterns of the lesson are reviewed by way of examples; and the key Chinese vocabulary words of the lesson are reviewed by dictation as an accompanying test.

(3) end of movie

Play and discuss the video "China before vs. China now" and guide students to imagine what China will be like in the future.

4. Case Studies

This lesson is divided into two lessons, the first focuses on vocabulary learning and the second focuses on sentence pattern practice. Through the two lessons, students have mastered and understood the vocabulary, sentence patterns and topics involved in "before and after" to a certain extent. Taking this case as an example, from the teacher's point of view, we analyze and reflect on the methodology of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory applied to the daily Chinese classroom, and summarize it as follows:

(1) Lowering Students' Psychological Defenses and Building a Relaxed Chinese Classroom

First of all, we set up age-appropriate points of interest at the beginning of the whole Chinese class to reduce students' fear and boredom of the language class in a relaxing and pleasant atmosphere. The target students of this lesson are primary school students, and taking into account the age of the students, we start the class with the game of "picking bombs" as an ice-breaker, which is a slightly more stimulating way for the students to review the content of the previous lesson, and it also enhances the activity of the class.

Secondly, we set up a point of interest at the end of the class to end the class in an unfinished way. In this lesson, the short movie "China before vs.

China now" was used as a topic to start a discussion on "China after". The short film is made up of pictures and videos with strong visual contrasts, which is suitable for the age of the students, and it makes the students understand the rapid development of China in recent years while they are surprised, and the students then start a heated discussion. If there is enough time, the teacher can also add drawing and other extensions at this time, so that interested students can develop their imagination and increase the diversity of the Chinese classroom.

(2) Social consciousness into individual consciousness, point-line-plane combination of teaching and learning focused on "internalization".

First of all, when setting up each session, attention was paid to combining the overall level and individual level of the students in the class, and setting targeted teaching objectives for them. There are 19 students in this class, 16 of whom have passed the Hsk level 1 exam and the remaining two have passed the YCT level 1 exam, which means that the difference in Chinese language proficiency between the students in this class is not huge, but we cannot rule out the possibility that there are two outstanding students and two poorer students in this class. Therefore, the differences and commonalities of the students should be taken into consideration when setting up each session, so as to maximize the knowledge brought to each student.

Secondly, we emphasize the connectivity and interactivity between each link, so that students can combine learning and reviewing, fall into the "knowledge network" carefully made by the teacher, and build a "scaffolding" of new and old knowledge to enhance the efficiency of Chinese classroom

learning. The teaching links of this lesson are as follows: reviewing the previous lesson - teaching vocabulary - teaching Chinese characters - teaching sentence patterns - reviewing the current lesson - expanding knowledge. Each link seems to be distant, but it can be penetrated layer by layer. For example, when learning new vocabulary, we can keep referring to old vocabulary to deepen students' impression, and we can use the same semantic field, the same radical, the same sound, and so on, to link the knowledge together, so that repetition can promote the occurrence of "internalization".

Finally, review and reflect again at the end of a series of tasks such as lesson planning and teaching. Use socio-cultural theories as a guide to summarize strengths and weaknesses and continuously optimize your teaching methods. Continuously link what students have learned with new knowledge, design and update the teaching in each lesson, semester and school year, and make "internalization" one of the goals of Chinese language teaching and strive for it.

Such a combination of point, line and surface will "internalize" in a more localized way into each class, will be able to improve the quality of their own teaching and at the same time really "teach a man to fish".

(3) Add a little bit of both words and phrases to guard the "zone of nearest development".

On the basis of understanding the current level of students, we help students improve their Chinese language proficiency in a subtle way. For example, in teaching Chinese characters, they are categorized by radicals to help students improve their literacy; in teaching vocabulary, they use antonyms and near-synonyms to help students improve their vocabulary more efficiently and provide near-synonyms for more advanced expressions to those who are more interested in learning; and in teaching sentence patterns, they provide students with a larger semantic field so that they can have room for improvement.

5. Conclusion

Discipline-based theories come from practice, but ultimately go back to practice. This paper uses sociocultural theories to support the design of the lesson "Learning Chinese with Teachers" and draws three conclusions in order to provide a little inspiration for international Chinese language teachers. However, the realization of theories such as "internalization" is a long-term struggle that requires teachers to carefully design each lesson without seeing immediate results. Teachers will only be willing to work hard for it if they continue to optimize their teaching and understanding abilities from multiple perspectives, such as psychology, anthropology, and pedagogy.

References

- [1] Zhu Y. Case and Analysis of International Chinese Language Teaching [M]. Higher Education Press.2015.
- [2] Qin Lili.Introduction to Sociocultural Theory of Second Language Acquisition[M] Peking University Press.2016.
- [3] Xie Fang,Yu Xinxin. A review of second language acquisition research from the perspective of socio-cultural theory[J]. English Square,2023,17:54-58.
- [4] Lantolf J, Qin LL. Sociocultural Theory - Philosophical Roots, Disciplinary Properties, Research Paradigms and Methods [J]. Foreign Language and Foreign Language Teaching, 2018,01:1-18+146.

- [5] Vygotsky. The Development of Higher Psychological Functions, *Soviet Psychology*, 1977, 15(3):60-73.
- [6] Lantolf, James P, Jiao Xi, and Valeriya Minakova. Sociocultural theory and concept-based language instruction, *Language Teaching* ,2021, 54(9)(3). 327-34.