

A STUDY ON CHINESE LEARNERS' EMOTION IN TPRS TEACHING METHOD: A SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This paper tries to take the sociocultural theory as the perspective and the TPRS teaching method as the research object, to explain and analyze the role of TPRS in promoting the positive motivation of Chinese language learners, to explore the development prospects, and to put forward suggestions for improvement.

Keywords: Sociocultural theory; TPRS; Initiative; Emotion; Cognition

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the application of sociocultural theory (SCT) in the field of second language acquisition has gradually increased and become one of the mainstream theoretical frameworks, which is of great significance in guiding the practice of Chinese language teaching and academic research. The theory focuses on the influence of the social environment on the individual learner or the interaction between the two, and emphasizes the importance of the learner's initiative and practical activities. The dialectical unity of cognition and emotion, individual and environment advocated by the theory is an important inspiration for the development of international Chinese language.

In terms of language learning and teaching, Swain emphasized the key role played by learners' emotions while also recognizing the inextricable link between emotions and cognition [1]. Qin Lili et al. explored the role played by novice teachers' emotions in their cognitive development, concluding that emotions can either facilitate or hinder their cognitive development[2]. Therefore, it has become a top priority for Chinese language learning issues to exert the subjective initiative of Chinese language learners, to help students establish the ability to perceive the pleasure of learning Chinese, the ability to regulate their emotions, and the ability to control themselves until they internalize their Chinese language ability.

The social environment is the source of psychological development[3]. However, in order for the objective social environment to be the source of an individual's development, the individual needs to interact with it by understanding, interpreting, acting, and reconstructing it [4]. In this way, the individual and the social environment form a dynamic interactive system, "the Social Situation of Development" (SSD) [5].

In the perspective of SCT, the socio-cultural environment should be regarded as the core influencing factor of mobility. Among the socio-cultural factors, cultural product moderators (e.g., rational instructional design) have a major impact on agency, and the impact of cultural product moderators is mainly manifested in the aspects of "rational arrangement of class tasks" and "task-driven" [6].

In view of this, this paper tries to take perezhivanie, mediation, activity theory, scaffolding, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and affordance in SCT as the perspective, to find out how the TPRS teaching method can be used in each classroom. The role and development direction of TPRS on Chinese learners' initiative are explained and analyzed, so as to stimulate domestic scholars' interest in the research on the international Chinese classrooms under the perspective of SCT and to provide references and guidance to promote the relevant research in this field in China.

2 TPRS TEACHING SESSIONS

2.1 Listening and Speaking

2.1.1 Establishing the meaning of vocabulary

The teacher presents the target vocabulary directly to students in Pinyin form rather than in written Chinese characters with translations into the students' mother tongue, and some simpler, less ambiguous words can be shown through pictures or body movements. The amount of target vocabulary should not be too much, but limited, and it will be displayed throughout the entire listening and speaking section, in order to facilitate the learners to look up new words quickly when they do not understand them, so as to ensure 100% comprehensible input.

The TPRS method emphasizes comprehensible input is important, and 100% comprehensible input is the guarantee of a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Therefore, the TPRS method advocates "listening first" and the use of Pinyin instead of Chinese characters in the listening input process, in order to minimize the obstacles and anxiety caused by Chinese characters to learners. According to SCT, cognitive and affective factors interact with each other and exist dialectically. Teachers provide scaffolding with reference to the students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which means the distance between the actual level of development and the potential level of development. An individual's development depends on the quality of the mediation received within his or her ZPD. If a problem-solving task exceeds the learner's cognitive capacity and leads to negative emotions, the learner's potential in the ZPD is reduced [7]. Since Chinese characters are non-phonetic, students whose native language is phonetic are generally intimidated by reading and

writing Chinese characters. In order to avoid negative emotions triggered by students' lack of self-assessment skills, teachers should use pinyin to establish the connection between sound and meaning when building vocabulary scaffolds, and then use Chinese characters to present the text materials in the subsequent reading portion to establish the connection between sound, meaning, and writings.

In addition, for simple vocabulary that can directly point to or describe specific things, actions, states or degrees, teachers can connect body movements with word meanings, and use games, performances and other practical exercises to mobilize students' various organs to participate in the learning process, so that the vocabulary can be used in communicative contexts for deepening vocabulary retention and good learning results. This teaching concept also fits SCT that the development of human thinking comes from the social interactions that individuals participate in the socio-cultural environment [8].

2.1.2 Building stories

The teacher presents the target vocabulary directly to students in Pinyin form rather than in written Chinese characters with translations into the students' mother tongue, and some simpler, less ambiguous words can be shown through pictures or body movements. The amount of target vocabulary should not be too much, but limited, and it will be displayed throughout the entire listening and speaking section, in order to facilitate the learners to look up new words quickly when they do not understand them, so as to ensure 100% comprehensible input.

In this teaching session, the PPT synchronizes the target vocabulary, target language points and freebies with storybuilding. The teacher and students make up a story together, with the teacher being responsible for providing the correct sentences and paragraphs with the target vocabulary and target language points through circular questions, and the students being responsible for providing the content and ideas of the story by answering the circular questions.

The storybuilding session can create an experience similar to "mind flow", which can stimulate learners' high degree of excitement and satisfaction, and its stimulating effect is mainly reflected in the following aspects:

(1) Unconsciousness

Teachers provide students with a lot of repetitions of limited vocabulary in listening activities to the extent that students can fully understand the language. The target vocabulary and language points can be acquired naturally after the students receive a large amount of comprehensible input, without excessive attention[9].

(2) Participation

Bring students into the story, make them the main characters, and bring their personal feelings and real life into the discussion. Teachers mobilize all students to develop their brains and mobilize their linguistic memory and imagination to promote the development of the story, but do not force students to express themselves orally, and even allow them to use their body language or a small amount of their mother tongue to replace the target language when they can't express themselves in the target language. In a relaxed and pleasant class atmosphere, students can actively participate in class discussions and talk about their own views and opinions, thus practicing their comprehension, listening level and speaking skills under the guidance of the teacher.

When the teacher utters a correct sentence, students need to respond immediately, such as saying the Chinese word "ah" with a dawning tone and gestures to interact with the teacher, which is a forced interaction method that can quickly capture students' attention and keep them engaged.

(3) Conflict

In order to make the story more interesting, teachers need to create problems or conflicts for the storyline, and introducing the target language in this process can make the target language get a lot of repetition opportunities.

(4) Unpredictability

In circular questions, the teacher chooses questions that are interesting to the learners in the context of the learners' lives or current events, and changes the angle of questioning constantly. When the teacher's questioning time, target and content are unpredictable, learners will be more attentive[10].

The above motivational features create a low affective filter and develop positive affective factors such as motivation and self-confidence, which are derived from the socio-cultural environment of the language in which the student lives. The social situation is a system of interaction and relationship between the individual and the environment. The social situation becomes SSD when the individual perceives, interprets and becomes emotionally attached to the social situation of the moment through his or her own perezhivanie[11].

Veresov emphasizes that individual development comes from conflictual events in social interactions, the latter also called dramatic events (drama), and that only those social relationships that are "dramatic", i.e., those that result from the conflicts or dramatic events in the individual's social environment that have an impact on the individual's emotions, become a source of development[12]. In such dramatic experiences, the interaction between emotion and cognition becomes more prominent, triggering qualitative changes in psychological functioning, and thus the situation is regarded as a turning point [13] or a growth point [14] in the development of the individual, at which time intervention and regulation are more effective, which provides theoretical support for social regulation and intervention in Chinese language education.

2.2 Reading

2.2.1 Direct character recognition reading

The class story created jointly by teachers and students in the listening session is organized into texts, presented to students in the form of Pinyin and subsequent Chinese characters, and read aloud for review, so as to establish the connection between sound, meaning and writings. This instructional strategy is called “direct character recognition reading” (CCR), in which students read a Chinese text without being taught the new words in advance; CCR is based on the premise that the language in the reading material has already been acquired in the brain in terms of sound and meaning before the students read the text, and that this acquisition occurs through a great deal of repetitive and interesting comprehensible input in listening and speaking activities[15]. After completing Chinese character literacy through extensive reading of stories in CCR, the student is capable of reading new texts that he has never heard or read before and that are not related to the stories told in class.

After the reading is completed, the teacher can introduce appropriate discussion by substituting the learner for the main character of the story and asking the learner about his attitude or approach.

2.2.2 Extended reading

Extended reading is based on the class stories created in the listening and speaking session. After completing the basic version of the reading material, the teacher and students can change the main characters according to the structure of the story, link up old knowledge, add interesting information, and adapt the story to get more versions of the story.

Students were generally active and focused during the reading activities for two reasons:

The CCR reading method helps students read the Chinese text directly and develop the habit of understanding and generating new language. Since the language in the reading material is 100% comprehensible to the students in the listening session, the students use the “Chinese voices” present in their minds to quickly recognize and read the unlearned Chinese characters and guess the meanings of the words, and the whole reading process is easy, pleasant and enjoyable for them.

Direct character recognition reading and extended reading provide sufficient affordance for learner’s motivation. Their highly repetitive features such as high internal repetition, high proximal repetition, and extensive text make each target word repeated hundreds of times, and it is this extensive and unpredictable repetition that makes for fluent readers[16]. In the subsequent read-aloud practice activities, teachers used a variety of read-aloud methods, such as teacher-led reading, whole-class reading, group reading, relay reading, and finally organized reading games for students in groups, to provide students with more than enough visual input time for recognizing Chinese characters. Peer interaction and teacher-student interaction practice the ZPD and scaffolding theory, and the theories reveal the social and cultural characteristics of cognitive development.

From the affordance theory, the relationship between the affordance of the environment and the efficacy of the learners is mutually defined and determined. In other words, if there is a match between something in the environment and the learner, affordance can be produced[17]. In reading activities, students are able to effectively perceive and interpret the potential learning resources and interactive learning opportunities of the reading environment, and therefore they generally take positive language learning actions.

2.3 Writing

The writing part includes task writing for describing the pictures and free writing for writing stories.

In order to allow learners to produce more written output in a low-affective-filtered learning environment, the TPRS pedagogy does not have a hard-and-fast rule on whether or not to use Chinese characters in the writing task, and encourages learners to write Chinese characters while allowing them to use Pinyin to organize their language.

In the section of writing stories, the author recommends the reading-writing integrated continuation task as a complement and refinement to the writing section. The pedagogy advocates maximizing the synergistic effect of output and comprehension in conjunction with external input[18]. The continuation task activates almost all the positive factors of enhancing learning, including the most important, learners’ initiative[19].

3 COUCLUSIONS

In the TPRS pedagogy, the relaxed and interesting class atmosphere, the highly participatory learning model and the unpredictable class stories greatly increase students’ interest and participation, and the high-density circular questions provide students with a large amount of comprehensible input, which encourages and stimulates them to generate more target language[20]. The pedagogy has a unique advantage in mobilizing students’ subjective initiative. Under the perspective of SCT, when studying the facilitating effect of TPRS on learners’ motivation, the socio-cultural environment and historical experiences of learners are considered as components of the motivation system, which is more in line with the ecology of Chinese language learners.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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