

DESIGN AND PRACTICE OF TPRS INTERNATIONAL CHINESE TEACHING MODEL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CULTIVATION OF HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

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Abstract: TPRS (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) is a story-oriented language teaching method, which emphasizes language learning in natural and interesting contexts and promotes students' independent learning and in-depth thinking. Since its introduction, the TPRS method has been recommended by foreign language teachers of different languages, more and more foreign language teachers have verified the remarkable effectiveness of TPRS in their teaching practice, and the relevant research results have also been enriched and developed. However, in the teaching of Chinese as a second language, there is still a relative lack of application and research on TPRS, especially for the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills. This paper attempts to supplement and improve the TPRS pedagogy through a series of teaching strategies and activities, such as real-life context motivation, group cooperation, continuation task, etc., in order to effectively cultivate and develop higher-order thinking skills of international students.

Keywords: Higher-order thinking; TPRS; International Chinese teaching; Cooperative learning; Continuation task

1 INTRODUCTION

Higher-order thinking is a hot topic in current international education research. Cultivating and developing students' higher-order thinking has become an inevitable requirement for cultivating innovative talents in the new era and a great challenge for higher education as well. In international Chinese language teaching, cultivating international students' higher-order thinking ability while realizing the goal of Chinese language teaching is an important issue which the innovation of international Chinese language class teaching faces, and it is also the key breakthrough to implement the core qualities of international Chinese language discipline and to cultivate innovative talents.

The excellent effectiveness of TPRS in second language teaching class has been widely verified, but there are many problems in the class teaching practice of Chinese as a second language, such as focusing on the teaching of language knowledge and skills, and the lack of teaching measures to cultivate students' higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzation, evaluation, and creativeness. This is the core issue explored in this paper.

2 THE DESIGN OF TPRS TEACHING ACTIVITIES FOR THE CULTIVATION OF HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

The TPRS teaching method consists of three basic parts: establishing meanings of vocabulary, story inquiry, and reading and discussion. In the section of establishing meanings of vocabulary, the meanings of the new language are shown directly to students and placed in an appropriate place for them to view them at any time; In the story inquiry section, the teacher sets up a story outline in advance and guides students to construct personalized stories by using the vocabulary they have learned and by asking questions and using pictures to prompt them; After the story construction process, reading and discussion section follows. The teacher will organize the complete story into a text, present it to students in the form of Pinyin and Chinese characters, and organize students to read aloud for review, so as to complete the connection of sound, meaning, and writings. The teacher then assigns reading materials for translation practice and asks questions about the content of the story.

Based on completing the above TPRS lower-order thinking stage of memorization and understanding, this paper designs a series of practical application activities, and transfer and innovation activities to help students realize the natural "climb" from lower-order thinking to higher-order thinking.

2.1 Real Situation Motivation

2.1.1 Function of real situation motivation

The so-called "real", in simple terms, means that the design of the project is linked to the real world or personal experience. The "real" is the reason for learning, not for the exam, and it makes students know why the concept or idea is important and why it took so long to explore the topic or issue. When students know exactly how what they do affects them and the world around them, they will have a stronger internal motivation to keep learning and exploring [1].

As a mode of thinking in which multiple cognitive components act synergistically, the development of higher-order thinking relies on a learning situation close to real-life experiences to activate the cognitive components therein [2]. Teachers create challenging learning tasks in real-life contexts, and students acquire information and knowledge in a

targeted manner while solving problems or completing projects [3]. Effective learning and teaching models should be based on questions with no definite answers in authentic situations, giving students the opportunity to explore and construct, facilitating the identification of connections between a prior knowledge and new information, and helping students integrate old and new knowledge to construct a cognitive model that is coherent with others and dynamically updated [4].

Drawing on the motivation session of Production-oriented Approach, an authentic language communication situation is set up before the first session of TPRS, to establish meanings of vocabulary, so that learners can try to complete some seemingly simple and ordinary, but actually challenging communication tasks, and then the teacher explains the teaching objectives and output tasks. The purpose of this motivation is to make learners feel the sense of urgency and hunger due to the lack of their own language proficiency, so that they can be more active in input learning for accomplishing the output tasks.

2.1.2 Teaching design of real situation motivation

[Case 1] Take the textbook New Era Spoken Chinese Series, Elementary Level·II, Lesson 5 “Payment by cell phone is OK” for example, the theme of this unit is payment methods. The motivation is divided into four steps, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Lesson Plan Design

Number	Step	Content								
1	Opening: the teacher asks questions to introduce the topic of the unit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you ever used a cell phone to make a payment? When did you use it? 2. What do you think are the advantages of cell phone payment? 								
2	Show the video about cell phone payment, present the communication scene and ask students to think about two questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When did she use cell phone payment? 2. What advantages does she think there are in paying by cell phone? 								
3	Students try to implement the communicative activities and tasks	<p>A. Group activities In groups of 3-4, introduce to each other: cash, bank card, and cell phone, which method of payment do you often use? Which one do you not often use? Why?</p> <p>1. Preparation: fill in the blanks with the key words.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Reason</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>I usually use _____ to make payments.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>I usually don't use _____ to make payments.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>I don't use _____ to make payments.</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>2. Have a talk: give an introduction to each other, according to what you have written.</p> <p>B. Ask a group of students to give an introduction to the class.</p>		Reason	I usually use _____ to make payments.		I usually don't use _____ to make payments.		I don't use _____ to make payments.	
	Reason									
I usually use _____ to make payments.										
I usually don't use _____ to make payments.										
I don't use _____ to make payments.										
4	Teacher explains the teaching objectives and output tasks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn expressions related to payment. 2. Introduce clearly how to make payments with a cell phone. 3. Discuss and compare several common payment methods. 								

2.1.3 Design note of case 1

The motivation session covers three characteristics: communicative authenticity, cognitive challenge and appropriateness of output objectives [5]. The reasons are as follows:

(1) Communicative authenticity: the communicative scenarios set in the unit are students shopping, dining, traveling, etc. in consumer places, thus they can feel the authenticity of the existence of these situations;

(2) Cognitive challenging: to complete the two communicative activities in the group and class, students not only need to have background knowledge reserves related to the topic of payment, but also need to describe and explain the payment preferences with appropriate forms of linguistic expressions, which is undoubtedly a challenge to students' knowledge accumulation and language proficiency. At the same time, the three cognitive processes of differentiation, organization and attribution in students' analytical thinking skills are expanded;

(3) Appropriateness of output objectives: the three communicative objectives of this motivation session belong to description with identification, explanation and evaluation respectively. The first two subgoals are less difficult and serve the third objective, the unit objective. The third objective requires students to use critical thinking to give evaluations and to judge which way of payment is the most effective. This requires a certain level of difficulty in terms of students' evaluation skills. Thus, the goal setting follows the principle of gradual progression and reflects the appropriateness of the output objectives.

2.2 Cooperative Learning

The development of higher-order thinking relies on learning contexts that are close to real social interaction experiences as well as cooperative, interactive, and constructive learning modes to promote the synergistic development of multiple cognitive components [6]. The student-centered cooperative learning model promotes the development of higher-order thinking skills such as deeper understanding, language expression, argumentative reasoning, problem solving, and knowledge transfer to varying degrees [7]. Cooperative learning, as a learning mode that can effectively promote the development of students' higher-order thinking, needs to rely on a good instructional design so that it can be organically integrated into the TPRS teaching class.

2.2.1 Student questioning

The American psychologist Brubaker said, "The most exquisite art of teaching follows the highest principle of letting students ask questions." Teachers in the TPRS teaching to encourage students to ask questions, improve students' ability to ask questions, will stimulate students' thinking initiative, promote their thinking from multiple perspectives, so that the TPRS class is more "open and dynamic".

2.2.1.1 Students questioning in the story inquiry session

Circular questioning is the core of TPRS story inquiry. The teacher asks multiple questions about each part of the target sentence (yes-or-no questions, positive and negative questions, alternative questions, and special questions), and then students answer them, and students' multiple answers will inadvertently repeat the target sentence many times. However, the multiple applications of this strategy tend to make students feel bored and tired, and then they may ignore different details of the questions and answer the target sentences mechanically [8]. Therefore, after the teacher finishes the circular questioning of the target sentence, he/she can ask the students to do the cycle again.

[Case 2]

Teaching session: circular questioning of the target sentence "Wang Mei wanted to pay by cell phone".

The classroom screen displays the sentence "Wang Mei wanted to pay by cell phone" and the words "ma", "who", "what", "or" in Chinese characters, Pinyin, and English translation. The students called Lin Zhi, Wang Mei and Meng Ke participate in asking questions. The dialogue between the teacher and students is as follows:

Teacher: Did Wang Mei want to pay by cell phone?

Students: Yes! Wang Mei wanted to pay by cell phone.

Lin Zhi: With what did Wang Mei want to pay?

Students: Wang Mei wanted to pay with her cell phone.

Wang Mei: Who wanted to pay by cell phone?

Students: Wang Mei wanted to pay with her cell phone.

Meng Ke: Did Wang Mei want to pay by cell phone or by cash?

Students: Wang Mei wanted to pay with her cell phone.

[Design note] In the above teaching session, it is no longer just the teacher who asks questions, but the students also participate in the questioning. In order to enable students to complete the questioning cycle smoothly, the teacher provides the Super 7 and Freebies to scaffold students' language output. This activity aims to cultivate students' freedom to ask different questions according to their individual language ability by using the prompted interrogative words in the form of cooperative teacher-student and student-student questioning and answering, which enhances the fun, and at the same time accomplishes the memorization and understanding of the lower-order thinking stage and lays the foundation for the subsequent higher-order questioning.

2.2.1.2 Students questioning in the reading and discussion session

In the third session of reading and discussion in TPRS, after students complete the exercises of reading aloud, translation, and reading comprehension of the story text, they enter the following part: (1) turn-taking questioning and answering (2) higher-order questioning.

2.2.1.2.1 Turn-taking questioning and answering

[Case 3] This case is adapted from the textbook *New Era Spoken Chinese Series, Elementary Level · II, Lesson 5 "Payment by cell phone is OK"*.

Teaching session: questioning and answering in rotation according to the story "Wang Mei and I went to the supermarket to buy fruits".

The teacher and students take turns quizzing on the story “Wang Mei and I went to the supermarket to buy fruits”, while the classroom screen displays the story in Chinese and Pinyin. The text of the story is as follows:

Today Wang Mei and I went to the supermarket to buy fruits, and she paid with her cell phone, which was very convenient. I asked her to teach me. She told me that I could pay with WeChat and taught me to tie my bank card to WeChat Pay, so I can pay with my cell phone from now on. Although I can try “Sweep” and “Receive Payment”, I am still used to using cash. Only when I use cash can I remember how much I spent. Also, I don't think it's safe to make payments with my cell phone, in case someone else uses my cell phone!

The dialogue between the teacher and students is as follows:

Teacher: Did Wang Mei pay in cash?

Lin Zhi: Wang Mei didn't pay in cash. What did Wang Mei use to pay?

Wang Mei: Wang Mei paid with her cell phone. What did you pay with?

Meng Ke: I paid with cash. What did Wang Mei teach me to do with WeChat?

Wang Mei: Make a payment. Why do you think it's not safe to pay with your cell phone?

Lin Zhi: In case someone else uses my cell phone! Why did Wang Mei pay with her cell phone?

Meng Ke: Because it was convenient.

[Design note] When students take turns to quiz on the story content, they first take reading input and then take the transferable output of answers and questions. The whole class participates in the class interaction in an orderly manner to further consolidate their understanding of the story. This activity is the same as the previous students circular questioning part in that students choose the questions with which they are most comfortable, and the questions posed are relatively single and simple, belonging to the lower-order category.

2.2.1.2.2 Higher-order questions

When encouraging and guiding students to ask higher-order questions, teachers should form heterogeneous groups according to students' ability level, learning needs and personality traits, and carry out hierarchical teaching.

First, for students who are excellent in Chinese language learning, teachers can encourage them to think beyond the text of the story and inspire them to ask comparative and extended questions. Take the above story as an example of the text as follows:

(1) Which method of payment do you think Wang Mei is used to? How did she pay with her cell phone? Such questioning can train students' reasoning and judgment skills;

(2) Do you think it is convenient to pay by cell phone? Why? Do you think the author's concerns are necessary? Why? Through these questions, students are guided to apply their newly learned knowledge and improve their analyzing and evaluating skills;

(3) If you were Wang Mei, what would you do to dispel the author's concerns? How could the story be rewritten if the author was used to paying by credit card? These questions require students to synthesize their analytical, evaluative, and creative thinking skills.

Through independent questioning, students think and progress in stages. Their thinking skills are mobilized and activated, their analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills are further enhanced, and higher-order thinking skills are developed.

Then, these excellent students are assigned to different groups for group discussion, and they drive their group members to actively ask higher-order questions and answer them after individual thinking.

Asking and answering questions in groups allows students with low cognitive levels to have the opportunity to participate in class questioning and prevents students with high cognitive levels from blurting out answers. This ensures that each student has equal opportunities to participate in class interaction, and promotes the development of each student's self-cognitive level as well, and at the same time promotes the realization of their reading goals in common, and creates their own reading “sharing” class, exploring the mysteries of the text and discovering the joy of reading in cooperation.

2.2.2 Role play

In the reading session, students can be asked to play the roles in the story and analyze the psychological activities of the characters in the story in groups, in order to develop the quality of their creative thinking [9]. Then they share their own group's performance in class and receive evaluation and feedback from other groups. This trains students' analytical and evaluative ability, and develop their critical thinking as well.

2.2.3 Students' video making of the story

The teacher transforms the story into a video. After watching the teacher's video example, students work in groups to create personalized story videos after class. In next class, the teacher shows the students' videos and the students compare, quiz, and evaluate their videos.

As the video comprehensively presents the picture, voice, text and other elements, the presentation is more vivid, graphic and detailed, and the teacher and students can dig into the discussion of richer content in the process of reading and discussing session [10]. This is conducive to stimulating students' learning initiative, activating students' comprehensive use of thinking ability for analysis, assessment and creativeness.

Cooperative learning stimulates students' awareness of autonomous participation, realizes the student transformation of the participation form from passive to active, and fully develops students' higher-order thinking skills.

2.3 Continuation Task

This paper recommends the reading-writing integrated continuation task as a complement and refinement to the writing session. This pedagogy advocates maximizing the synergy between output and comprehension in conjunction with external input [11]. The continuation task activates almost all the positive factors that contribute to language learning, including the most important, learners' initiative [12].

The continuation task is placed after the reading discussion. The student makes up a story based on the one constructed in the unit in various ways: change the ending of the story, add new characters, or guess the development of the story, continuing the author's intention of writing. Meanwhile, the vocabulary list and the story built in class can be used as auxiliary language materials to be consulted when needed, with the aim of allowing students to imitate the language style and the target language of the unit, to organize as much as possible a richer language based on the topic of the unit, and to cultivate analytical, creative and critical thinking skills.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The exploration of TPRS teaching mode from the perspective of the higher-order thinking is a deepening development based on the existing TPRS mode. Through profound, effective, diversified and appropriate teaching strategies and activities, combined with the cognitive rules and psychological characteristics of students, students' higher-order thinking abilities such as analyzation, evaluation and creativeness are stimulated and developed, so that the core literacy of the international Chinese language discipline can really be realized in the TPRS teaching.

COMPETING INTERESTS

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

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