Chapter 6

Mobile Experience in Teaching Chinese Pinyin:
A Case Study of Teaching Pinyin at an Elementary School of Confucius Institute in New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

In New Zealand, for non-Chinese speaker learners aged 5-12, the Chinese courses provided by the Confucius Institute are usually based on the premise of increasing interest, with the main teaching goal of improving students' oral communication skills and increasing their understanding of Chinese and Asian culture. Therefore, it is an effective way to improve the quality of Chinese teaching by fully considering the students' cultural background and combining modern teaching techniques with traditional teaching content. Guided by N.S. Prabhu's task-based language teaching methods, this chapter uses a case study method to explore how to use the mobile applications and other multimedia technologies to improve the teaching effect of Chinese Pinyin in a New Zealand elementary school.

INTRODUCTION

The development and widespread use of mobile technologies, such as smartphones and tablets, has created vast opportunities for learning anytime, anywhere (Kukulska-Hulmer & Traxler, 2005). The advantages of mobile learning such as low cost of

equipment and convenient access to massive resources from the Internet, brings great application potential in the field of education. The powerful mobile technology changes the nature of the physical relationship between the teacher, the learner and the teaching content, so it can well serve contemporary pedagogies in different contexts. (Churchill, Lu, & Chiu, 2014).

The use of mobile technology in language learning is playing a positive role as well. It helps students improve their English listening abilities through live streams, English songs, radio and other authentic materials (Gangaiamaran & Pasupathi, 2017). iPads can be used to decrease writing barriers in the Chinese language learning (Eubanks, Yeh & Tseng, 2018). Through educational application games, students' vocabulary can be improved, meanwhile, mobile devices also enhance student participation and increases the collaboration between peers and teachers (Perron & Nouri, 2018).

In 2019, the author, as a Mandarin Language Assistant of Confucius Institute, taught Chinese at a primary school in New Zealand for 9 months. New Zealand is a multicultural country with a prominent immigrant culture and a mature modern education system. The national basic education program of New Zealand points out that "communication" is the main goal of second language learning. The teaching object of the author is the primary school students aged 5-13. The requirements of the school syllabus for Chinese learning are as follows: the premise is to arouse interest, the main teaching objective is to improve oral communication ability, and through various cultural activities increase students' understanding of Chinese culture and Asian culture. Studies have shown that there is a significant relationship between beginners' level of spoken Chinese and their Chinese character reading and cognitive ability (Everson, 1998). Therefore, in the teaching design, the author takes Chinese pinyin as the basic content throughout the whole school year, at the same time, under the guidance of task-based teaching method, uses different mobile technologies to increase the interest of learning pinyin, so as to improve students' learning effect.

This chapter takes the author's teaching practice as a case to study how to apply mobile technology in Pinyin teaching for second language learners and the effect of applying mobile technology in Chinese language teaching, in order to improve the learning experience for future Chinese language teachers and learners.

BACKGROUND

Mobile Technologies Applying in Pinyin Teaching

The basic unit of Chinese written language is a character, which is a non-phonetic script. Due to the ideographic nature of written language, the pronunciation

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