

Comenius on the Intuitive Teaching of Chinese in Primary Schools

Xu Renjie, Xiao Jumei
Huzhou Normal University, Zhejiang, China

Comenius initially discussed the theory of intuitive teaching in his book *Great Didactic*, which has guiding significance for the teaching of Chinese teachers in primary schools nowadays: (a) using various types of teaching aids to lighten students' attention; (b) mobilizing the students' multiple sensory experience to develop students' imagination; and (c) carrying out Chinese teaching practice to let students perceive the aesthetic value of Chinese learning.

Keywords: Comenius, *Great Didactic*, intuitive teaching, primary school Chinese, sense organ

Introduction

"Intuition" can be directly accepted and observed by the senses. According to Comenius (2014), "All knowledge begins with the perception of the senses" (p. 87). Comenius focuses on sensory education, which is, the role of intuitive teaching methods in the process of knowledge teaching. Generally speaking, the transition from concrete image to abstract logical thinking is the overall development characteristics of children's thinking in primary school stage. Children in lower grades still mainly think in concrete images, which is easier to understand the knowledge content related to their perceptual experience. Therefore, the application of Comenius's intuitive teaching theory in Chinese teaching conforms to the stage cognitive level and psychological development law of primary school children.

Using Various Types of Teaching Aids to Lighten Students' Attention

Comenius (2014) vividly compares "attention" to a beam of light in the dark (p. 127). He assumed that the students were in a dark environment of ignorance, the prerequisite for teachers to transfer knowledge and wisdom is that students' attention should be focused on teaching content. Pupils are usually used to accept the learning mode of knowledge under the guidance of teachers (Wang & Sun, 2018, p. 178). The attention concentration state of junior school-age children in class depends on the intuitive image of teaching content and other factors (Tang, 2015, p. 185). How to guide students to focus their attention on the classroom as long as possible has become the first step of teachers' teaching and students' learning Chinese curriculum.

The use of teaching aids is one of the widely accepted methods. There are many types of teaching aids, such as pictures, models, hanging pictures, and so on, but they are not limited to these forms. All kinds of teaching aids may be flexibly used by teachers in specific teaching situations. The basic Chinese learning

content of primary school students mainly involves four aspects: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which should be corresponding to the cultivation of the ability of recognizing Pinyin and Chinese characters, reading comprehension, writing exercises, and oral communication. Teaching aids can also lighten students' attention in these four contents. Taking Chinese character teaching module as an example, in addition to the traditional classroom teaching demonstration, teachers can add basic strokes or related illustrations on the classroom walls. In this way, teachers can not only timely mention the contents of hanging pictures in classroom teaching, arousing students' intentional attention, so that students' audio-visual awareness can communicate, and more directly experience the method of how to write Chinese characters. Besides, after class, teaching aids, such as hanging pictures already exist in students' vision, and students can observe pictures independently on weekdays, and also obtain corresponding sensibility experience. The teaching wall chart creates a writing atmosphere, and students are imperceptibly exposed to the influence of the environment (Yang, 2015, pp. 82-83). Their interests in learning to write has been improved. Thus, the existence and introduction of teaching aids can be regarded as an intuitive Chinese teaching method. Comenius also advocated that on the walls of the classroom, it is better to use picture examples to explain the content taught in the classroom vividly. If this is done, it will greatly help a teacher to put his teaching into the hearts of his students (Comenius, 2014, p. 91). In addition, teachers should remind students not to focus on teaching aids too much, in order to avoid the adverse effects. Teachers can also try other ways to make students feel and perceive intuitively to lighten their attention.

Mobilizing Students' Multiple Sensory Experience to Develop Students' Imagination

Students' sensory experience is directly obtained by themselves. Comenius (2014) said that, "If we want to educate young people correctly, we should first pay attention to their real feelings of the outside world and flow from their spiritual source" (p. 97). Transfer his viewpoint to the process of students' learning, we can see that students in the classroom, the main visual and auditory cooperation, receive the information from the teacher. What students observe with their eyes and hear with their ears are more likely to persuade themselves to believe in the indirect experience of teachers' teaching, and leave a deep memory of their understanding of knowledge rather than forget it in a short time. The purpose of arousing the students' multiple sensory experience is to start from the students' origin and form a living stream. How to apply the above Comenius theory in primary school Chinese teaching is worthy of teachers' careful consideration.

First of all, children's imagination is extremely rich. Teachers can make good use of this feature to develop imagination through students' senses and make imagination serve learning. For the teaching of low-level Chinese Pinyin, the Pinyin alphabet is a very abstract symbol in the eyes of primary school children. With a large number of vowels, they need to memorize, read aloud, and write in a standardized way, which is bound to be very difficult step by step. Therefore, teachers try to connect children's complex symbols with things they can understand. Based on students' sensory experience, teachers can promote their imagination and help them understand through vivid and interesting expressions. In particular, some similar phonetic alphabets, such as b, d, m, n, p, q, etc. At first, the teacher tries to prompt the students that "m is like two doors", and then asks the students what is "n" like in real life? Students' answers are bound to be varied. By analogy, teachers continue to let students observe other phonetic alphabets and give positive answers to students' reasonable answers one by one, respect students' different perceptual knowledge, encourage them to discuss warmly and express what they think. Of course, teachers still have to screen students' answers and unify a way of

understanding that is acceptable to most students, so as to avoid unnecessary interference of learning information. Secondly, imitation is the natural nature of children. Pinyin teaching requires students to read and write correctly. Reading aloud is one of the ways to assist the writing of Pinyin. Based on Comenius (2004), “Students should learn to speak with their mouths and express what they say with their hands” (p. 91). When students read Pinyin aloud, teachers should remind students to use the phonetic alphabet as the basis for their understanding of the phonetic alphabet.

All things in nature start from the root (Comenius, 2014, p. 96). To be sure, in this respect, the law of development of man and nature is similar students’ cognition and growth also comes from the individual itself. Teachers should always grasp the student view and teaching view that students are the main body of classroom and teaching, and give full play to the initiative of students. In fact, teachers are constantly adjusting teaching strategies with the dynamic of students. The process of thinking about students, feeling their feelings, and mobilizing their senses (including touch, smell, etc.) naturally establishes the psychological connection between students and teachers, changing the students’ completely passive state, and they have more opportunities to express their opinions, the sense of experience in class participation is strengthened, and the students’ imagination is developed.

Carrying out Chinese Teaching Practice to Let Students Perceive the Aesthetic Value of Chinese Learning

Referring to the new curriculum standard of primary school Chinese, Chinese subject is more practical. Teachers should pay attention to the cultivation of students’ Chinese practical ability, making use of rich teaching resources, providing students with practical opportunities as much as possible, letting them have more direct contact with Chinese materials, and understand and master the law of using Chinese in many practices. This shows that the students’ learning of primary school Chinese subject is not only theoretical content, but also written form. Students should be aware of the fact that “Chinese comes from life”, gaining from the influence of life practice, and then further serve the written learning of Chinese. The teachers’ responsibility is to choose materials that meet the students’ cognitive scope or carry out Chinese teaching practice, germinating students’ aesthetic experience of life, and perceive the aesthetic value of Chinese learning.

In order to cultivate primary school students’ writing ability, the above-mentioned curriculum standards clearly define the goals of primary school students in each stage in writing. The common point is that children should gradually develop the habit of paying attention to the things around them, observe and explore appropriately, and express everything they feel in written language. Primary school students usually fall into a dilemma that they have no way to start and no content to write. The inspiration of composition writing actually comes from life, so life has long provided students with a “treasure land” to obtain endless writing materials. Teachers can make full use of teaching time, changing the traditional teaching mode, expanding students’ learning space, leading students to return to the embrace of life, and jointly observe a certain scene in the campus in a relaxed and harmonious atmosphere. The process of observing campus is also appreciating the beauty of life. Of course, the first step for the teacher to clarify the purpose of the activity is not simply entertainment, deepen their understanding of the meaning of the activity, so as to maintain their intentional attention (Tang, 2015, p. 25). Then, the teacher stipulates the appropriate range of activities, so that students can freely choose something to observe. After a while, the students were recalled, and they dictated what they perceived. Due to the single perspective of students at the beginning, the description of the content presents

both general and scattered characteristics. Careful observation requires both breadth and depth (Zhang, 2009, p. 26). Therefore, teachers need to induce students to pay more attention to the joint experience of hearing, smell, touch, and so on, so that they can re explore. The second time the students' interest becomes more intense, they will observe more carefully. Finally, the teacher repeats the above steps to remind students to keep their feelings in mind and turn them into writing materials. After returning to the classroom, the teacher arranges the on-the-spot composition with the theme of "a corner of the campus" to achieve the teaching purpose.

Students' immediate experience is often the most intuitive. Comenius believes that language learning in youth should be related to the learning of things, so that our knowledge of facts and the ability to express facts can progress together (Comenius, 2014, p. 139). Moreover, children have a natural curiosity about everything, and the real world attracts them all the time. Children's intelligence and language should be practiced on materials they are interested in (Comenius, 2014, p. 140). And real life is one of the best materials for them to learn Chinese. A person with first-class keen and fine observation must be a person full of curiosity about the world, and his life must be full of fun. Such a person will live a more profound life. This is also the purpose of education (Zhang, 2009, p. 17). As a starting point, teachers carry out Chinese teaching practice, aiming at infiltrating students' awareness of paying more attention to life, strengthening their observation of things around them, and intuitively perceive the aesthetic value of Chinese life.

Conclusion

In a word, Comenius advocates that the school-age children who are in their childhood should be educated in the sense of feeling and develop their mind by using their senses (Comenius, 2014, p. 195). The theory follows the stage characteristics of children's physical and mental development. However, it is not perfect to pay attention to the senses to acquire all knowledge, only to put forward the importance of perceptual knowledge. Teachers need to make it clear that children's direct experience obtained by sense organs only stays at the level of perceptual knowledge, and does not rise to rational knowledge. Comenius overestimated the role of intuitive teaching method. The acquisition of external knowledge by learners is not enough to master knowledge only through the intuitive knowledge of the senses (Chen, 2018, pp. 138-142). Therefore, students' understanding of the external relations of things and the perceptual cognition of Chinese learning still need teachers' gradual guidance, so that students can see the internal essence through the appearance and develop into rational knowledge, so that they can really learn for use. This paper tries to combine Comenius' intuitive teaching theory with primary school Chinese subject, in order to bring enlightenment and thinking to teacher education.

References

- Chen, L. H. (2018). On the feeling of education in *The Great Teaching Theory* by Comenius. *Educational Modernization*, 4(23), 138-142.
- Comenius. (2014). *Great didactic* (pp. 87, 91, 96-97, 127, 139-140, & 195). Beijing: Educational Science Publishing House.
- Tang, L. Y. (2015). *Foundations of psychology* (pp. 25 & 185). Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press.
- Wang, H. P., & Sun, H. W. (2018). *Child development psychology* (p. 178). Beijing: Education Science Press.
- Yang, Q. (2017). Comprehensive application strategy of teaching aids in writing teaching. *China Educational Technology Equipment*, 30(1), 82-83.
- Zhang, Y. (2009). *Research on composition teaching in primary schools from the perspective of sensory education* (pp. 17-26). Chongqing: Southwest University.