

# A Brief Analysis of the Application of Pictures in Online Elementary Chinese Teaching

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**Abstract:** During the current pandemic period, second language classroom teaching with "communication and interaction" as an important feature is forced to change its main teaching mode and go online. For some teachers who are accustomed to traditional face-to-face lectures and lack online teaching experience, they are prone to adopt cramming education in online classrooms, which is not conducive to the development of students' learning enthusiasm, and cannot meet the demand for Chinese teaching. From this perspective, this article takes the application of pictures in online elementary Chinese teaching as the topic and expresses its own opinions by taking into account its own daily teaching work, and at the same time, by reference to the existing theoretical analysis of experts and scholars. The aim is to better promote the orderly and efficient progress of online teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL) through analysis.

## 1. Introduction

Under the impact of COVID-19, education has undergone tremendous changes, and TCFL has also ushered in many challenges. The spread of the pandemic has made Chinese learners "unable to come to China" and Chinese teachers "unable to go out of China". Many TCFL has been forced to move online, which put forward higher requirements for teachers. Chinese Pinyin tones include level tone, falling-rising tone, falling tone and entering tone. For the same phonetic symbol, if the tones are slightly different, the corresponding meaning will be quite different. Therefore, Chinese learners will face many difficulties in learning and mastering the tones

Online teaching has more limitations than offline teaching, and many teaching activities cannot be carried out. Teachers and students are connected through screens, which makes it difficult to interact effectively. Teachers cannot pay attention to the learning status of each student, and it is difficult for students to concentrate for a long time. However, online teaching also has its own unique visual advantages, for example, using vivid and eye-catching pictures, diagrams, expressive vocabulary and grammatical sentence patterns to simulate situations. Moreover, the effective teaching time of one online lesson is very limited. If the teacher can make reasonable use of pictures to assist teaching, he can not only save time, but also improve teaching efficiency and spend time on key teaching. Therefore, in order not to reduce the effect of online teaching, we should amplify the advantages of online teaching to a greater extent and overcome its shortcomings compared with face-to-face courses.

## 2. Advantages of pictures in online teaching

In terms of Treichler's research, Tan Qiyang pointed out in a follow-up analysis that for normal people, visual learning accounts for 83%, auditory learning accounts for 11%, and taste learning accounts for 1%, olfactory learning accounts for 3.5%, and tactile learning accounts for 1.5% [1]. It can be learned from this analysis that mobilizing visual senses plays a key role in the routine teaching. In addition, Ma Yuan (2007) used Chinese characters and pictures as the analysis objects, made comparison successively from the perspective of perceptual interference effect and activation level, and pointed out that the picture has a strong activation level. The main reason for this is that the picture contains more two-dimensional code visual structure, but the visual structure provided

by vocabulary has the characteristics of unity [2]. Chen Lili (2009) pointed out that the effect of superiority of pictures is that pictures can help recall and enhance coding [3].

Pictures replace text to explain the carrier of the content learned, to reduce the use of interlanguage, to vividly display abstract information, and to ensure more efficient teaching activities between teachers and students. In addition, for second language teaching, interlanguage is one of the key factors affecting the quality of teaching. Especially when learners have insufficient Chinese vocabulary and poor learning foundation, it will be difficult for teachers to explain to students the vocabulary or context in the target language. Especially when the class is taught in Chinese and the learners are relatively unfamiliar with the target language, the difficulty of teaching will increase accordingly. In order to improve Chinese teaching, it would be better to incorporate pictures into teaching and supplement teaching with sign language and body language to enhance understanding, replace interlanguage output and text output, play the role of Chinese learning environment, which can not only reduce the burden on teachers, but also avoid the cramming education and provide students with an immersive Chinese experience.

Pictures can replace words to reproduce specific life situations and describe many specific things and specific actions. Although they have limitations in expressing abstract concepts, they are sufficient for elementary TCFL. Pictures are especially useful for the teaching of nouns. A noun corresponds to a picture, which is simple and clear and easy to be understood by students, and thus shorten teaching time and improve teaching efficiency.

Picture-based teaching will present in front of students teaching-related content in the form of pictures vividly and in detail, and allow classroom teaching activities to be carried out in a happy classroom atmosphere. Pictures not only can explain textbook knowledge, but also can enrich and innovate classroom teaching content, enabling students to devote themselves to classroom learning and learn in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. For example, when teaching desks, chairs, lamps, power supplies and other furniture, the author created a PPT slide for each word, showing various pictures of tables or chairs marked with Chinese characters and Pinyin. First, the author as a teacher briefly described the pictures so that students had a basic understanding of the content shown. Second, the author gave students a demonstration reading and let them form a preliminary correspondence between the picture and the pronunciation in their brain. Third, the author leads the students to read the words three times and corrects the pronunciation. Finally, the pictures in different rooms will be shown to allow students to find the information contained, which is conducive to deepening the memory of new knowledge, and at the same time mobilizing their old knowledge reserve to achieve the effect of reviewing what has been learned and learning new knowledge. As a result, after practicing repeatedly in class and timely review and consolidation through homework after class, the learners can easily learn how to say things around them, which is also a great help to improve their enthusiasm for learning Chinese.

In summary, if the teacher uses pictures to assist in teaching, it can enable students to understand the meaning of the target language in a relatively short period of time. At the same time, it can enrich the classroom content, stimulate learners' interest in learning, and avoid they are fear of difficulties, so that they can learn the language more actively.

### **3. Selection of pictures in online elementary Chinese teaching**

In the selection of courseware pictures, full consideration should be given to students' cognition and Chinese proficiency at the elementary stage, and the information conveyed by the selected pictures should be intuitive and single. Pictures are the silent interlanguage in teaching, and the simpler the words, the more accurate the words. The complex pictures can easily confuse students and unnecessarily interfere with students' input.

Teachers should understand the actual conditions of learners in advance, and choose suitable pictures for auxiliary teaching according to learners' learning content and learning level. The selection of pictures may not be limited to textbooks, but the use of each picture should be purposeful. When making interspersed pictures of teaching courseware before class, teachers should preset pictures selected for teaching in advance, clarify what you want students to understand from

the selected pictures and what kind of teaching effect you want to achieve, and design related language tasks based on students' current target language proficiency, so as to improve classroom participation. Secondly, it is required to understand students' actual needs, choose pictures that are closely related to students' daily life under appropriate premises, enhance students' enthusiasm for learning, and create a positive and efficient classroom teaching environment.

Therefore, for the selection of each picture in the teaching courseware, the teacher should choose carefully, and do a good job in designing the explanation of that part before class. In actual teaching, the teacher should adjust the teaching method according to the specific situation, be good at capturing generative teaching resources, guide learners to output the target language, and improve their oral expression level.

#### **4. Classroom model in online Chinese teaching with pictures**

Language learning requires a lot of practice to make progress. On the basis of long-term hard practice, the learner may acquire the ability to speak target language and enhance the learner's language communication level. During the routine teaching work, teachers should select appropriate teaching mode based on the content of the specific teaching section and the actual condition of the students.

##### **4.1 Vocabulary**

When Chinese learners are in the primary stage, they do not have a good command of target language. When teachers use the target language to explain the target language during routine teaching, it is difficult for students to understand. Under such circumstances, if the vocabulary is presented in the form of pictures, it will help improve the efficiency of classroom teaching. The teacher can use pictures that are closely related to the image of objects to teach vocabulary, so that students can establish a relationship with the language through the pictures, which not only can reduce the errors that may be caused by mother tongue interference, but also can stimulate the brain system and guide students to further deepen their mastery and understanding of knowledge.

Especially for the teaching of content words such as nouns and verbs, pictures can vividly show the meaning of words. For words of which the meaning cannot be directly conveyed to students with pictures, such as function words and adverbs, teaching with pictures cannot be as direct as the teaching of content words. The teacher needs to use teaching skill to bring such function words or adverbs into specific context, and use pictures to help students understand the context, so as to help students understand the interpretation and usage of words in combination with the context. The comprehension of Chinese quantifiers is more complicated for learners at the elementary Chinese level. In teaching, teachers can use pictures to match numerals, quantifiers and nouns together and teach them together. Then, the teacher may change the number of items corresponding to the nouns, step by step, and allow students to consciously perform collocation exercises, so that students can naturally grasp the collocation relationship between specific quantifiers and nouns through practicing repeatedly.

In addition to explaining the meaning of vocabulary, pictures can also be used in the review and practice of vocabulary teaching. Teachers can develop various forms of teaching based on the teaching content, for example, linking pictures and corresponding vocabulary, and viewing pictures for explaining words. In this step, vocabulary teaching can also be combined with simple sentence structure teaching. For example, after finishing the vocabulary teaching of furniture or daily necessities, the teacher can show pictures in different rooms. At first, a student is asked to conduct demonstration exercises: the teacher asks questions using the pictures, and the student should give the answer. "Is there...in the room?" "Yes/No." "What's in the room?" "There is...in the room". Later, two students are asked to form a group to practice asking and answering questions. Through ask-and-answer demonstrations, students can have a detailed and in-depth understanding of the meaning of the sentences, thereby deepening their understanding of the sentences and mastering the ask-and-answer methods of such simple sentences.

The picture information makes intuitive and clear the content that needs to be explained, reduces

the teacher's output of interlanguage, avoids the influence of the mother tongue, and greatly improves the classroom teaching efficiency.

## **4.2 Grammar**

The grammar of Chinese is complicated, and there are many related words, which is not easy for learners to understand. It can be regarded as a difficult point in Chinese teaching. In classroom teaching, if teachers pay too much attention to teaching grammar principles, they will ignore the students' absorption capacity and at the same time reduce the opportunities for students to participate in the classroom.

In the routine teaching, grammar practice involves the following different levels. First, mechanical practice is used to guide students to have a certain awareness and understanding of common grammar rules; second, through targeted practice, students can proficiently apply grammar to routine conversation [4]. Teachers can use pictures to construct new schemas related to language points for students, prepare and design pictures with context and stories. For example, when explaining the word "or", the teacher can show pictures of two items, coffee and tea, respectively, and help students understand that the word "or" contains the meaning of selection. In this way, complex language points may become less obscure, enhancing students' enthusiasm for learning, allowing students to naturally immerse them into Chinese learning and actively input information. Under such a teaching mode, it is required to make a design in advance for the interaction of relevant pictures in the classroom, increase the interaction with students, and make full preparations for teaching.

Teaching grammar with the help of pictures provides a wealth of teaching resources for learners. It can not only keep students to pay attention to the classroom teaching, but also help students' think divergently and give full play to the teaching function of pictures.

## **4.3 Conversation**

Online teaching cannot fully reproduce real communication situation, which is different from offline teaching. However, in online teaching, we can use pictures to create a language environment close to reality to the greatest extent possible based on the content of conversation in the text, simulating real communicative dialogue. Students can continue to strengthen the practice in the created environment, guide the students to actively express their views, thereby strengthening the students' oral expression ability and the ability to communicate using the target language.

It is required to select pictures according to the relevant content of conversation in the text, and guide students to observe the information in the pictures from multiple angles, paving the way for students' subsequent understanding and memory of the text. Subsequently, the teacher should give a demonstration reading at first, and students should try to understand the meaning of the conversation through the pictures shown; then, the teacher should lead the students to read sentence by sentence, listen carefully to each student's pronunciation, and correct the pronunciation in time. In this process, when students have doubts about some vocabulary, the teacher should not directly provide answers to students, they should give appropriate hints, and encourage students to make guesses based on the pictures. Instead of relying on rigid text information to understand new words, students should guess complete information based on the information they have already understood. It makes students easier to remember and grasp the meaning, and also helps train students' reading ability.

Context created by pictures can provide students with a more realistic communication context. Through this method of teaching, students can naturally understand and master common conversations in daily life or conversations in special circumstances.

## **4.4 Culture**

School's TCFL activities are designed to enhance learners' ability to use Chinese to communicate efficiently. Therefore, culture teaching should not be neglected in TCFL, and both should be carried out at the same time. However, in terms of online teaching, learners usually have no experience of

living in the target language country, so they do not have a deep understanding and recognition of the country's society, culture and other fields in a limited time.

In the teaching of tourism-related topics, cultural-related language is more complicated and difficult for students to understand. Instead of explaining some obscure and incomprehensible historical knowledge, teachers should use pictures as an entry point to show related cultural phenomena or historical roots, so as to arouse students' curiosity. The examples include Tiananmen Square and the Palace Museum in Beijing, the Big Wild Goose Pagoda and the Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Qin Shihuang in Xi'an. Intuitive pictures can make students feel its magnificent momentum and unique cultural charm. Through cultural output, teachers can take the opportunity to deepen the students' impression of Chinese history and culture, and thus promote their feelings for Chinese.

In addition to Chinese history and culture, students are also very enthusiastic about understanding Chinese food culture during Chinese learning. Our country's food culture has a long history. There are diversified cooking methods and unique cuisines in different regions. Teachers can choose some typical food and snacks representative of each region. For example, before explaining Shaanxi food Biangbiang noodle, the teacher can first ask students which Chinese characters they have learned are the most complicated, and then show the pictures of the writing of the character Biang, so as to stimulate students' interest in learning.

Through a series of typical pictures and teacher's explanation, the learners' understanding of the culture of the target language country will be improved, so that students can feel the customs of the target language country as if they are in the country. In second language learning, if learners have a certain degree of understanding of the culture of the target language country, it can effectively promote their follow-up learning.

#### **4.5 Issues needing attention in online Chinese teaching with pictures**

How to deal with the dialectical relationship between the student as the subject and the teacher as the guide is the key to the success of online teaching. When carrying out the teaching, teachers should actively conduct teacher-student interaction, give full play to the enthusiasm and initiative of students in learning, guide students to practice the target language output, and avoid cramming education.

When showing pictures, the teacher should give students enough time for thinking and reaction to avoid blindly explaining by the teacher without considering students' feelings. It is required to ask questions at the right time to check the learning effect of learners, and make adjustments in time if problems are found. Pictures should not supersede what really count or completely replace the interlanguage, and can only play a supplementary role in teaching. Moreover, the classroom interlanguage needs to be simple and concise, and spoke clearly at a moderate speed. When using pictures to assist in teaching, the teacher should use certain sign language or body language to give effective instructions and mobilize students' attention. For example, the teacher may thumb up to express approval and encouragement; raise hands to remind students to speak and answer questions; tilt head slightly to the side and put a hand behind an ear to signal students to read; raise two hands in turn to indicate role-sharing dialogue. This kind of simple and intuitive sign language can greatly improve teaching efficiency.

Teachers and students in online teaching are connected through screens, and the scope of teachers' supervision and control is very limited. Students' learning enthusiasm is reduced, and their initiative is far poorer than in offline teaching. Teachers should pay attention to keeping students' attention. It is required to give positive feedback to students' performance in class, and correct mistakes on the premise of without damaging students' enthusiasm. If a student is denied or criticized due to a mistake, it will affect their enthusiasm in the Chinese teaching class. It is required to scientifically control the teaching content of each class, make targeted teaching plans and arrangements according to the students' actual conditions, and scientifically adjust the teaching progress, so as to seize the generative resources of teaching, provide students with more opportunities to practice the target language. Teachers should also actively innovate and diversify

teaching methods to increase their classroom appeal to students. It is required to maintain students' curiosity and avoid they are fatigue and slack in class.

## **5. Conclusion**

Under the background of the pandemic, online teaching has become a general trend. There are many differences between online teaching and offline teaching in terms of teaching mode, teaching strategy and teaching activities. As Chinese teachers, we should stick to the principles of language teaching and improve teaching methods; summarize experience, improve teaching quality, give full play to and use the advantages of online teaching, and make up for its deficiencies; actively seek better teaching strategies to keep warm the "Chinese fever" by continuously optimizing their own teaching skills.

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