

# On Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language from the Perspective of Contrastive Linguistics

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**Abstract:** For a long time, teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL) mainly focused on the transformation of applied contrastive linguistics, while ignoring the philosophical explanation of the value and significance of "contrast" by theoretical contrastive linguistics. At present, the number of Chinese learners in the world is increasing year by year, and learners' Chinese proficiency is getting higher and higher, which puts forward higher requirements for our teaching quality and level. This paper explains that in the understanding of theoretical contrastive linguistics, through the method of "contrast", we can see the profound national thinking behind it and its reaction to language through the surface structure of language. We take "contrast" as an important methodological principle of language research, especially with the help of the height of theoretical contrast, we can examine the similarities and differences between languages, find the characteristics of language, and further on the macro level understand the characteristics of Chinese language itself systematically and comprehensively. Only by carefully grasping the theoretical value and significance of "contrast" can we construct a theoretical framework, teaching model and method system for TCFL in line with the characteristics of Chinese.

## 1. Introduction

Teaching Chinese as a foreign language (TCFL) is a second language teaching, which is an independent subject. Often pay attention to the research and improvement of teaching methods, and its discipline foundation is linguistics, pedagogy, psychology, language acquisition theory research and other disciplines, in which linguistics has been playing a unique and important role<sup>[1]</sup>. In the second language teaching, the characteristics of the language taught permeate all aspects of the language teaching content, which is closely related to the teaching methods and learning methods in the overall theoretical framework of second language teaching. At present, the research on the language of TCFL mainly focuses on the characteristics of the language of TCFL. Due to the great differences between TCFL and other language teaching and professional teaching, scholars focus their research on the characteristics of the language of TCFL<sup>[2]</sup>. TCFL not only teaches Chinese characters to foreigners but also spreads culture. Even if it is purely Chinese teaching to foreigners, there is still a cross-cultural communication problem<sup>[3]</sup>. As a new and young subject, there is a difference between TCFL and traditional language teaching. Through the specific comparative study of the two teaching languages, to distinguish the different characteristics of the two teaching languages, under the support of multiple language teaching theories, while analyzing the specific differences, then the importance and necessity of the language contrast study for TCFL is put forward<sup>[4]</sup>.

## 2. The development of linguistics promotes the innovation and development of TCFL

### 2.1 Research on TCFL

The innovation and development of TCFL can be traced back to the development and reform of linguistic methods. At the end of the 19th century, the exchanges between different countries and ethnic groups became more and more frequent, and language communication, especially oral communication, became the most urgent form of language communication among countries<sup>[5]</sup>. The

traditional language translation method has been unable to cultivate the foreign language talents urgently needed by society. Therefore, it is urgent to change the mode of TCFL. At the same time, the development of psychology and pedagogy also provide a theoretical source for the reform of TCFL, resulting in the direct method. Language is the thinking and the communication tool of human beings. The purpose of language teaching is to help learners master this thinking tool and communication tool as soon as possible. Linguistics teaching aims at cultivate students' language consciousness, and the goal is to improve learners' linguistic knowledge and language application ability. Teaching language is an important tool for carrying out teaching activities, and teachers' language ability is one of the necessary basic qualities of teachers<sup>[6]</sup>. Teaching language is an important media tool for the whole classroom teaching activities to run through the organization. The use of teaching language directly affects the teaching quality of teachers, so it has always been highly valued by educators and researchers. In recent years, the research on foreign language teaching language and professional course teaching language has also gradually increased. Figure 1 shows the teaching mode of Chinese as a foreign language.

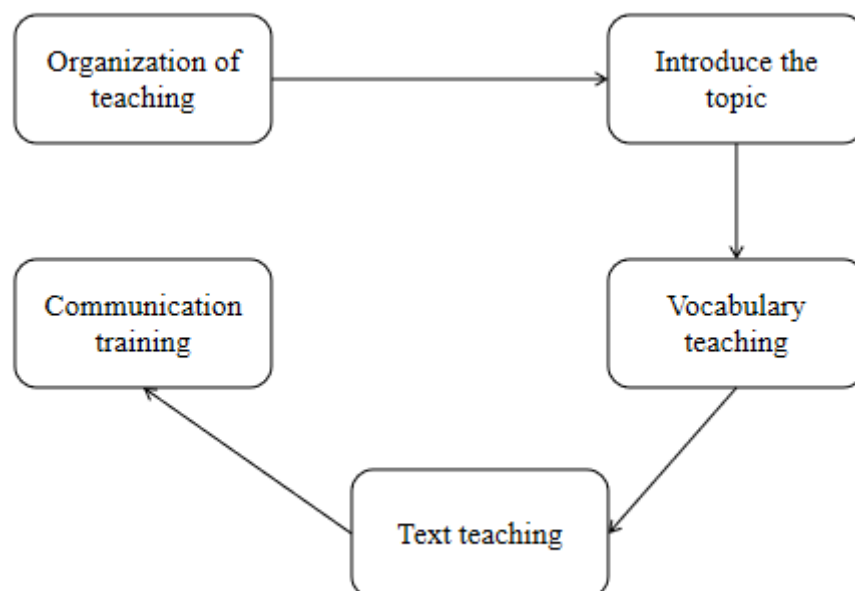


Fig. 1 Teaching mode of Chinese as a foreign language

However, domestic research on teaching language is mainly based on intuitive description and empirical summary, and there are few constructive researches combined with theories. In terms of the "functional method", the mainstream teaching theory of a second language in the world after the 1980s, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language has gradually transitioned from singing in unison at the beginning to combining the actual teaching of Chinese as a foreign language and our existing successful experience, with the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. The teaching methods of the past form organic integration.

## 2.2 TCFL is permeated with the factors of linguistic theory

TCFL has its own characteristics, but TCFL is also an integral part of second language teaching. Naturally, we can observe language from two aspects. On the one hand, it is a symbol system; on the other hand, it is the carrier of culture, the tool of thinking and the tool of communication. In TCFL, teachers pay more attention to the teaching of language as a symbol system. The teaching of Chinese as a second language is influenced by vocational and educational purposes, so the purpose is to enable students to learn listening, speaking, reading and writing for language communication. Culture teaching is based on the interdependence, restriction and development of language and culture, and the ultimate purpose of foreigners learning Chinese is to seek cross-cultural

communication and understanding and appreciation of another culture's attitude, customs and values. Based on this, the focus of TCFL is cultural teaching. In the early 1960s, the teaching mode of "listening and speaking first" was once popular in the field of TCFL<sup>[7]</sup>. After 1960s, with the rise of systemic functional linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, verbal communication and textual linguistics, some theoretical concepts and propositions such as communicative competence, speech act, conversational rules, conversational implicature and speech function were put forward, all of which were absorbed by the second language teaching circle, and promoted the emergence of communicative functional approach. Since the 1990s, "structure function" teaching method has become the mainstream voice of TCFL. This fully reflects the distinctive characteristics of the combination of absorption and innovation in TCFL.

### **3. Contrastive study of languages are helpful for learning Chinese as a foreign language**

#### **3.1 Contrastive analysis of the traditional language teaching mode and the TCFL mode**

The traditional foreign language teaching theory holds that learners should first master the form of the language, understand the language content and express ideas through the language form, and then the teacher cuts the text into fragmented vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammatical points. The focus of teaching is on the teacher's explanation of these vocabulary, sentence patterns and grammar. Teaching mode has a certain theoretical basis, which maintains the teaching theory and practice, and at the same time reproduces the teaching process, which is operable. There are two kinds of language teaching research. The first is inductive, that is, the summary of practical experience. The second is deductive, logical inference, constructing a certain pedagogical system. Experience-based pedagogy research is invaluable. But it often lacks universality. Language teaching belongs to the category of applied linguistics. The research of language teaching should pay attention to the theory of linguistics. Only under the guidance of theoretical linguistics, can applied linguistics be able to embark on the scientific road. Teaching Chinese as mother tongue, in addition to studying basic language knowledge and improving application skills, also needs to improve students' literary accomplishment and cultivate their ideological quality, with the highest goal of cultivating innovative spirit<sup>[8]</sup>.

Traditional language teaching reflects the law of language, that is, the teaching content includes cultural background knowledge and special cultural knowledge, and the teaching of special cultural knowledge provides deep-seated cultural heritage and cultivates students' high-level aesthetic ability. TCFL pays more attention to the teaching of grammar rules, while the grammar knowledge exposed to traditional teaching is thick. The teaching process can be summarized as "explain-practice". We can see that this teaching mode embodies the typical behavior theory. The teacher first stimulates learners by explaining grammar and sentence patterns, allowing learners to perceive new knowledge, and then uses repeated exercises to reinforce what they have learned before. Acquired knowledge in order to consolidate the learning effect of the learners. Any teaching method serves a certain teaching purpose and task. The purpose of TCFL is language communication, while the traditional language teaching is for students' lifelong development and healthy physical and mental development. Because of different teaching contents, TCFL focuses on pronunciation and grammar, while traditional language teaching focuses on reading and writing. TCFL is a small class teaching or one-to-one teaching, while the traditional language teaching method is class teaching system<sup>[9]</sup>. The traditional teaching language is the mother tongue education and teaching language which takes the mother tongue as the carrier and is good at humanism and artistry. The language of TCFL is a foreign language education and teaching language with the target language as the carrier and good at instrumentality and communication.

#### **3.2 The importance and necessity of contrast study of language**

Contrastive linguistics aims at exploring the differences between the two languages, and then to reveal the basic characteristics, basic principles and basic laws of the language. The contrast study of Chinese and foreign languages is conducive to improving the quality of TCFL. The difficulties

and mistakes of foreign students in learning Chinese are different. From the perspective of linguistics, it is the result of negative transfer caused by the different structures, pragmatics and ways of thinking between mother tongue and Chinese. If we want to determine the difficulties and emphases of foreign students' learning Chinese, and carry out targeted teaching, we must make a contrast study of the two languages, which is the fundamental method of scientific research and also an important research method of linguistics. Only through contrast can the commonness and individuality of the studied objects be revealed. As a second language teaching of Chinese, knowledge should be transformed into language skills. The method focuses on training language skills, and after repeated practice<sup>[10]</sup>. There are also differences in the cultural background of students in the classroom of Chinese as a foreign language. Teachers need to understand the cultures of various countries and teach according to local conditions.

As far as Chinese is concerned, teaching foreigners to learn Chinese is the best place to provide practical problems and the best practice to test whether the theory is in line with the truth.

#### 4. Conclusions

It is a common contract symbol among social members, and it has a certain stability. Language contrast research needs to pay attention to each other's differences, ask and explore each other's personalities, so as to cultivate people's sensitivity to language differences, and improve their language level and cultivation. According to the different teaching objectives, the teaching language will have different emphases in function. Generally speaking, every teaching method theory is based on certain linguistic theories. For language and culture, we must first have a sense of equality. Chinese as a second language teaching is centered on skill training and transforms language knowledge into skills. Therefore, students majoring in Chinese as a foreign language should grasp the characteristics of Chinese as a second language teaching in teaching practice, pay attention to and highlight the particularity of second language teaching different from mother tongue teaching in the formulation of teaching objectives, the selection of methods and the grasp of principles, so as to better organize teaching and enable learners to achieve the purpose of language learning in the shortest time. TCFL can combine language and culture. Let foreigners master authentic Chinese, understand real China and real Chinese culture, and let Chinese people understand real foreign countries. This is of great benefit to China's internationalization. A good teaching model can organically combine teaching theory and teaching practice, make abstract teaching theory concrete, build a bridge between theory and practice, and guide specific teaching practice.

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