Exploration and Practice of Integrating Chinese Character Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools Into Excellent Traditional Chinese Culture

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ABSTRACT

In the teaching of Chinese characters in primary and secondary schools, problems such as "character amnesia" and wrongly written characters can still be found. There are two main reasons: first, students don't know the origin and development of Chinese characters; second, students fail to better understand the excellent traditional cultural factors in Chinese characters. In order to improve the teaching effect of Chinese characters, it is necessary to strengthen the teaching of the origin and flow of Chinese characters, and pay attention to the scientific teaching of Chinese characters. In the process of Chinese characters teaching, it is advisable to integrate excellent traditional culture, and necessary to make good use of modern teaching technology and network resources.

Keywords: Chinese characters, teaching, traditional culture

I. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese curriculum standards of compulsory education points out that "a variety of literacy teaching methods and visual teaching means should be used to create colorful teaching situations and improve the efficiency of literacy teaching", and requires "cultivating the sentiment of loving the language and characters of the motherland".

The learning task group of "Language Accumulation, Sorting and Exploration", the Chinese curriculum standards for ordinary senior high schools, points out that "in all Chinese activities, there should be a goal of accumulating Chinese characters, relevant phenomena and rational understanding of Chinese, understanding the important role of Chinese characters in the development and application of Chinese, and consolidating and deepening the knowledge of Chinese characters learned in compulsory education; understanding the relationship between Chinese characters, Chinese and traditional Chinese culture and the national characteristics of Chinese, and enhancing the love of the Chinese language and characters." The Chinese curriculum standards also designed the learning task group of "Symposium on Chinese Characters and Chinese" to deepen students' rational understanding of Chinese characters and Chinese.

It can be seen that Chinese character teaching plays a very important role in Chinese teaching in primary and secondary schools.

II. STATUS QUO

In 1998, Mr. Gu Huangchu proposed that there are ten problems in Chinese education, among which the first one is "The education of Chinese characters has been seriously neglected". (Gu Huangchu, A Hundred Years of Chinese Subject Education, Chinese Reference Middle School, Vol. 1-2, 1998.) Now, after 20 years, more and more attention has been paid to the education of Chinese characters, and the media and the public have paid more attention to Chinese characters. The emergence of programs such as "Chinese Character Dictation Competition" of CCTV and "Chinese Spelling Hero" of Henan TV has aroused the love of all walks of life for Chinese characters. But there is no denying that there are still some problems in Chinese character education, especially in basic education. Here are some common problems for the student groups:

A. Character amnesia

The widespread use of computers, mobile phones, tablets and other electronic products has made it easier and faster to input Chinese characters, but this has also led to a relative lack of written Chinese characters. A recent survey of 2,002 respondents conducted by China Youth Daily Social Research Center and wenjuan.com shows that 76.5% of respondents feel their language is getting poorer and poorer. An earlier survey found that 94.1 percent of people have experienced character amnesia, and 26.8 percent of them often have such experience, which is typical among young people.

B. Wrongly written characters

In the stage of basic education, Chinese is the basis for learning other courses. Without certain reading ability, the learning of other courses will surely be affected. The learning of Chinese characters is the priority among priorities. However, what is shown is that wrongly written characters is common in students' learning process. Some very common words are wrongly written even by teachers and the public.

III.   CAUSES

A. Failure to understand the origin and evolution of Chinese Characters

Chinese characters have a long history. As a relatively mature Chinese character, oracle bone script has a history of three or four thousand years since then. It has experienced various stages of development such as jinwen (inscriptions on ancient bronze objects), big seal style, small seal style, official script, cursive, regular script and running script, etc. To understand the origin and development of Chinese characters is helpful to better grasp the meaning and evolution of each character.

B. Failure to understand the excellent traditional cultural factors in Chinese characters

Language is the carrier of culture. Chinese characters carry a lot of cultural factors. Lu Xun has elaborated on the aesthetic function of Chinese characters in the "Outline of Chinese Literary History", "When composing an article, one describes mountains as high and steep and waters as roaring, surging and boundless; the narration of exuberance and luxuriantly green makes people feel as if they were in a luxuriant forest, and that of trout, gurnard, eel and carp makes people as if they were watching a lot of fish. Therefore, the Chinese characters features three kind of beauty, namely beauty in meaning, which delights the heart; beauty in form, which pleases the ears; beauty in form, which feast the eyes."

IV.   COUNTERMEASURES

A. Strengthening the teaching of the origin and evolution of Chinese characters

In December 2017, the website of UNESCO announced that China's oracle bone script had passed the evaluation of the International Advisory Committee of UNESCO's Memory of the World and was included in the list of "Memory of the World". Therefore, oracle bone inscriptions are not only the precious cultural heritage of the Chinese nation, but also the common spiritual wealth of mankind. As Chinese, we should have a deeper understanding of oracle bone inscriptions and be familiar with them so as to better protect our characters. In the teaching of Chinese characters in primary and secondary schools, it is very effective to show the ancient Chinese characters represented by oracle bone inscriptions to the students for them to firmly grasp Chinese characters. If the origin and the evolution of Chinese characters into the teaching can be integrated, students' deep interest in learning can be more easily stimulated and they can experience the charm of Chinese characters in learning happily. For example,

Fig. 1.   Representative glyphs of "日" from oracle bone inscriptions to the character in other stages.

"Fig. 1" shows the representative glyphs of "日" from oracle bone inscriptions to the character in other stages, from which the meaning of this character is clear: it is a pictographic character, like the shape of the sun, so its original meaning is "sun". Since the sun appears during the day, it can be extended to mean "daytime". From day to night, what was most easily felt by the ancestors was the process of the sun from appearance to disappearance. Therefore, "日" can be extended to mean "a day".

Fig. 2. Evolution of the word "败".

"Fig. 2" shows the evolution of the word "败". Today, to combine the initial form of the character "败" when explaining it to students, can make the explanation intuitively and clearly. The first character in the picture is "败" in oracle Bone inscriptions. On the left is a vessel of great value, and on the right is a hand beating the vessel with a stick, so its meaning is "destruction".

B. Paying attention to the scientific nature of Chinese character teaching

At present, there are many books explaining Chinese characters in the market, but they are in a mixed bag. Some of the explanations, in fact, are misleading to the study of Chinese characters and if attention is not paid in the scientific nature, the loss will outweigh the gain from the long run although students may remember a character in a short time. For example, the now popular phase "止戈为武", literally meaning "military forces are to be used only for the maintenance of peace and order". So people think this shows that in the eyes of ancient Chinese, "military forces" is to stop fighting, reflecting that we have always been loving peace since ancient times. This statement, namely the interpretation of the glyph, is wrong, from which the point of view, cannot withstand scrutiny. The glyph of "武 (related to military)" is indeed composed of "止 (which literally means to stop')" and "戈 (which refers to weapon)" ideographically. However, the "止" here is not the "止" meaning "stop", but the protoform of "趾" meaning "toe". The "趾" used here is to represent the whole as a part, which represents a man. When a man carries a weapon, he goes to war, not to stop fighting.

For another example, as is believed by people, "To have both '子 (son)' and '女 (daughter)' is '好 (happiness, a good thing)', shows that the ancients realized that a family with girls in addition to boys was "better". This explanation seems to make sense and is consistent with our traditional beliefs. But when looking at glyph, we can see that this is wrong. The character "好" in oracle bone script is 𤔲, 𤔲 etc., which look like a mother holding a baby. There are many good things, but it's

amazing how our ancestors grasped "the birth of a new life" to mean "good." In addition, in ancient times, "子" did not necessarily mean male. In the "Book of Songs", "子" refers to the bride as in "之子于归，宜其室家". Therefore, the "子" in "好" can refer to either a boy or a girl. And the "女" in it refers to the mother of the baby.

The word "冒" is often wrongly written. Many people struggle to decide whether the word is larger at the top or larger at the bottom, and whether it is "日" or "曰" at the top. Actually, the character at the top is neither "日" nor "曰", but "冃", which is composed by "冂" (a box that goes down) and two horizontal strokes. "冃" represents a hat, and the "目" below it refers to the head, which refers to a whole as a part (the eye). "冒" cannot be found in oracle bone script. It is 𤓰, 𤓰, etc. in jinwen, like a head in hat. Later, because "冒" was often used to represent the meaning of "pop out" and so on, and the hat was made of silk fabrics, so it got a character component "巾 (meaning a piece of cloth)" and became "帽". Students won't write the character wrongly if they can understand this.

What's more, when writing the characters "尴尬", many take "九" as their character components. However, it should be "尤", whose original form is "尪", pronounced wāng, refers to the curvature of the bones in the chest, shin, back, etc., and also refers to a person with such a disability.

C. Integrating excellent traditional culture into the teaching of Chinese characters

As the world's only recognized self-originated language in use today, the Chinese character is a great cultural heritage of the Chinese nation's contribution to world civilization. At the same time, in the process of generation and development, Chinese characters have also integrated into the traditional culture of Chinese nation. On February 24, 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out at the 13th Group Study Conference of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee that, "Core values are the soul and key point of cultural soft power construction, and the deepest element that determines the nature and direction of culture. To cultivate and carry forward core socialist values, we must base ourselves on the fine traditional Chinese culture." In the teaching of Chinese characters, the excellent traditional culture should be more integrated, so that students can have a better understanding and grasp of the excellent traditional Culture while learning Chinese characters happily and efficiently, so as to establish national confidence.

Since both teachers and students are Chinese people, teachers can teach students the characters "中

(zhong)" and "国 (guo)" based on the origin of Chinese characters. In this way, while grasping the two Characters, students can develop a better sense of national identity.

The glyphs of "中" are ↟, ↟ and ↟, etc. in oracle bone script ↟, ↟, and ↟, etc. in jinwen. The ancients tied ribbons on the flagpole to test which way the wind was blowing, and the position of the flagpole was the center. The ancient glyph for this character is still used as a trademark today, as shown in "Fig. 3".

Fig. 3. The example of the ancient glyph for "中" stilling being used as trademark.

This is a very familiar "中国邮政 (China Post)" logo, which is often neglected by people. Less well known, it is actually an ancient variant of the Chinese character "中". The use of ancient Chinese characters, or their deformation, to design trademarks, is very cultural. Many units and companies have used this method. For example, the logo of Beijing University is shown in "Fig. 4"
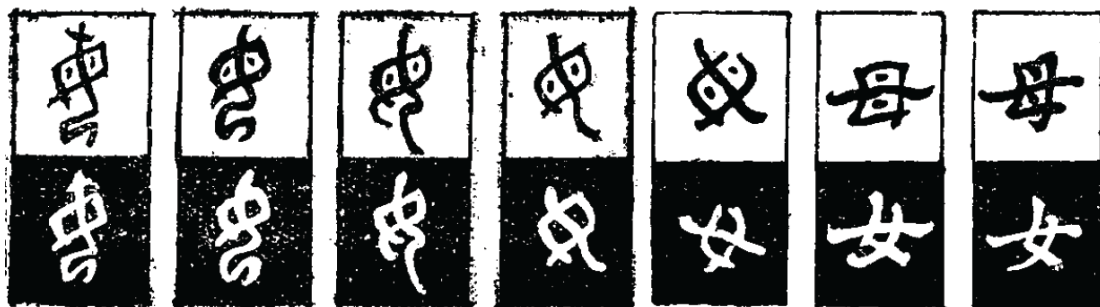

Fig. 4. The logo of Beijing University.

Originally designed by Lu Xun, the logo is an ancient Chinese character for Beijing University and looks like three people, symbolizing that the school is a place for education.

Let's look at the character "国". "国" is written as ↟ in oracle bone script, like guarding "口" with "戈". In fact, "戈" refers to weapons, and "口" refers to territory. In jinwen, the character is encased based on its glyph in oracle bone script, written as ↟, which is very close to the traditional Chinese character "國". Here the space encircled is "或", namely "域". The simplified Chinese character "国" uses "玉", with the same pronunciation of "yu" as " written in the same pronunciation as "域".

In Chinese characters, there is often an internal connection between characters. Sorting out these connections can help learners better understand Chinese characters and better understand traditional culture. Here, the characters "女 (female)" and "母 (mother)" as an example.

In , "女" is written as ↟ in a pictographic way, the shape of a woman. Yet the character "母" is: two points added on the base of "女". The word-formation shows when a woman has the ability to breastfeed, she becomes a mother. When looking closely, we can still see this connection in modern Chinese characters (see "Fig. 5").

Fig. 5. The relationship between the characters "女" and "母" and their evolution process.

D. *Making use of modern teaching techniques and network resources*

In today's society, with the rapid development of science and technology and the integration of Chinese character teaching into excellent traditional culture, it is necessary to make the best use of modern teaching technology and network resources. The following is an introduction to the daily use of more, in order to help teachers in their daily teaching.

1) Font file: There are abundant font files on the Internet. With the help of them, people can easily enter various fonts including oracle bone script and small seal into the computer.

2) Learning website: Many well-made websites, if used properly, can play a good role in mastering Chinese characters and deepening the understanding of Chinese characters and culture. For example,

- Guoxuedashi (Master of Chinese Culture). The website is http://www.guoxuedashi.com/ This website provides a large number of resources, with early 60 language learning reference books and other classical books including the "Grand Chinese Dictionary", "Chinese Dictionary", allowing retrieval and text and image synchronization.

- Handian The website is https://www.zdic.net/ This site has a variety of materials, including the order of strokes of all characters in animation.

- Zihai (sea of characters) The website is http://yedict.com/ The site includes 130,000 characters, 110,000 of which have definitions. It also provides a variety of methods of searching words. For example, when searching the character "篪", one can enter "竹虎", "竹 hu", "zhu 虎", "竹 10", "Zhu Hu", "?虎", and so on, which is very convenient.

- Ziyuan Website (Etimologia of Chinese characters) The website is https://hanziyuan.net/ The site's founder, Richard Sears, called "Uncle Hanzi" was featured on CCTV's "The First Class." This website is of great help to clarify the origin, meaning and pronunciation of Chinese characters.

- Name stamp making website The website is http://www.makepic.com/print.php This website allows people to make electronic seals of various fonts as long as two to four Chinese characters are entered. The stamps can be used as profile photo for QQ, WeChat, etc., which has distinctive features and can arouse people's interest and attention to Chinese characters.

V. CONCLUSION

In short, for the Chinese character teaching in primary and secondary school, a variety of means used to integrate excellent traditional culture for teaching will be a big boost for students' interest in learning and their learning effect.

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