



Multimodal Teaching: A Feasible SLA Teaching Method of Mandarin

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Abstract. Mandarin learners fails to reach the best effect of studying Mandarin in traditional Mandarin teaching methods when the number of Mandarin learners increases. Based on the bad Mandarin studying effect, Mandarin teachers seek new Mandarin teaching methods. The multimodal teaching is widely used in English teaching, and it is beneficial for students to study English, but this method is rarely used in the Mandarin teaching. Therefore, it is worthwhile to explore the application of multimodal method in Mandarin teaching. The four elements of Mandarin teaching explored in this study are Mandarin phonetic teaching, Mandarin vocabulary teaching, Mandarin grammar teaching and Mandarin character teaching. In the multimodal Mandarin teaching classes, Mandarin learners can mobilize their multiple senses to understand Mandarin and practice Mandarin like using both vision and hearing. Mandarin learners can master the standard Mandarin pronunciation by the gesture of Mandarin teachers in Mandarin phonetic classes. In Mandarin vocabulary classes, earners can use pictures and situational methods to understand Mandarin new words. Mandarin learners can grasp abstract Mandarin grammar by using the animation and sentence template in Mandarin grammar classes. In Mandarin character classes, it is useful to use fingers and Tianzige to write Chinese characters. From this article, it is clear to see how the multimodal teaching method improves the Mandarin teaching.

Keywords: Multimodal teaching · Mandarin teaching · Multimodal Mandarin teaching

1 Introduction

In recent years, the number of Mandarin as a second language learners has increased [1]. Until 2021, more than 25 million people worldwide are learning Mandarin, and the cumulative number of people learning and using Chinese is close to 200 million. More than 4,000 universities have set up Chinese departments, specialties and courses, and more than 75,000 mainstream primary and secondary schools, Chinese language schools and training institutions offer Chinese language courses. (The People's Daily 2021) [2]. Many countries encourage students to learn Mandarin especially along the Belt and Road. Therefore, Mandarin learners choose to go to China to receive the better education of Mandarin learning. Based on the situation that more people learn Mandarin, Mandarin teaching methods are emphasized and focused.

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However, some Mandarin learners cannot reach the best effect of studying Mandarin due to traditional Mandarin teaching methods. Firstly, the traditional Mandarin teaching regards the textbook as the main information resource, which reduces the teaching efficiency [3]. The main problem of using the textbook as the major resource is to decrease opportunities of communication for students. Secondly, the traditional Mandarin teaching fails to pay attention to each student and make suitable studying schedules to them. Mandarin learners are gathered in the classroom, but their Mandarin levels are uneven. Students who cannot catch up the explanation of Mandarin teachers lose confidence in studying Mandarin. Thirdly, the monotonous traditional Mandarin teaching make students become distracted. Hence, Mandarin learners cannot reach the ideal effect of Mandarin learning due to the traditional Mandarin teaching. Therefore, traditional Mandarin teaching is out-dated and it is necessary to seek the new Mandarin teaching and improve the Mandarin teaching methods.

Multimodal teaching is a new teaching method. In the 1990s, Western studies scholar Kress and Leeuwen combines social symbols based on critical discourse analysis research achievements in the fields of linguistics, systemic-functional grammar and traditional discourse analysis. Therefore, the concept of “multimodal discourse” was put forward [4]. Chinese scholar Gu Riguo defines multimodal theory as mankind through the senses (sight, hearing, touch, etc.) interact with the external environment (people, machines, objects, etc.) between [5].” Interacting with a single sense called single mode, two is called double mode, three or more is called multimodal mode [6]. The essence of multimodal teaching is situational teaching. The biggest teaching advantage is to teach the teaching content in situational way in order to maximize simulate students’ interest in understanding knowledge. Nowadays, English teachers apply the multimodal teaching ways into English classes and students have strong motivation towards learning English. Multimodal teaching leads students to enter the real situation, inspire students to have interest in learning English and help students extend their mind border [7]. From the multimodal teaching ways, students who study English dare to practice their spoken English and improve their comprehensive English ability. By using multimodal teaching resources, students can take a more flexible and diverse approach to learning. Digital resources have a large amount of information, novel form and strong timeliness, and the relevant teaching resources are more rich, diversified and real, which are more in line with the current needs of college students for teaching materials and can improve students’ learning initiative [8]. Multimodal teaching model, teachers in many ways photos, videos and physical activities to simulate senses of learners and create scenarios, make full use of Internet and other modern media to regulate the classroom atmosphere, enhance classroom effect to mobilize students’ cognitive senses [9]. In English classes, the second language learners have good interactions with English teachers, and they are passionate to learn English. Students can have English debate, create the English drama and retell stories with facial expression to reduce the anxiety of learning English. Currently, the main mode of classroom activities is oral mode, while the intonation, volume, body posture, hand posture, emotion, movement and other modes of teacher and students are auxiliary modes [10]. With such a strong motivation and the deep understanding of knowledge, students become autonomous self-learners. Self-learning in the classroom

should reflect the student-centered, independent learning by ability of students to self-analysis, exploration, practice, creation, to achieve learning objectives [9]. Multimodal teaching also helps students have a better understanding of English culture and students learn English efficiently based on the cultural context. As for English teachers, they are active to solve problems during the interaction with students. In classes, teachers are no longer limited to textbooks in the selection of teaching content and can make full use of network resources to supplement relevant teaching content and guide students to learn pre-class, in-class and after-class reasonably [11]. By using the multimodal teaching, English teachers can find and solve problems through bidirectional assessment, and further improve the quality of multimodal teaching [12]. It is obvious to see that the multimodal teaching improves students and teachers teaching efficiency and students have good attitudes towards learning to become the active learners.

However, the multimodal teaching ways are rarely applied into the Mandarin teaching. Mandarin teaching is still in the development stage. Traditional Mandarin teaching fails to give students the best Mandarin learning experience. Inspired by the multimodal teaching applied in English teaching, Mandarin teachers make efforts to explore the multimodal teaching and conceive various games to help students participate in the classes. However, few people know how to apply the multimodal teaching into Mandarin teaching well. It is valuable to explore benefits of multimodal teaching applied in the Mandarin teaching when the technology is developing and consider the study efficiency of Mandarin learners when Mandarin teachers apply the multimodal teaching to the Mandarin teaching. Also, it is meaningful to explore how multimodal teaching affects the emotional condition of students. Multimodal teaching applied in English teaching is beneficial to listening, speaking, reading and writing of students. Based on the experience of multimodal teaching applied in English, this article describes the application of multimodal teaching in Mandarin teaching from four part: 1) phonetic teaching; 2) vocabulary teaching; 3) grammar teaching; 4) character teaching.

2 Multimodal Teaching Methods of Mandarin

2.1 Multimodal Teaching Applied in Mandarin Phonetic Teaching

The traditional Mandarin phonetic teaching is that students follow Mandarin teachers without any multimedia while the application of multimodal teaching is divided into using videos and using gestures to help students pronounce correctly and locally.

Using videos is beneficial for Mandarin learners to simulate the tone of Mandarin. Many Mandarin learners fail to have standard spoken Mandarin because they are affected by their mother tongue. Therefore, Mandarin teachers play the video of the pronunciation of new words before learning new words. From the video, Mandarin learners understand the correct pronunciation initially and they can distinguish the differences between the standard pronunciation and their own pronunciation. Video mobilizes senses of students to remember the pronunciation. Besides, Mandarin learners can play the video of the pronunciation of new words after class. Phonetic practice is a meaningful method to improve the pronunciation of Mandarin and the video is a tool for Mandarin learners to consolidate the pronunciation. If Mandarin learners forget the pronunciation of Mandarin, they can replay the video repeatedly. Mandarin learners activate their memory by

listening the pronunciation that the video plays. Unlike the traditional Mandarin teaching, Mandarin learners only listen the pronunciation in class by following the pronunciation of Mandarin teachers. Moreover, the lip and tongue map in the video helps Mandarin learners know about the correct pronunciation of characters. Mandarin teachers use the lip and tongue map to correct the Chinese characters with similar pronunciation. It is easy for Mandarin learners to see the differences of the similar pronunciation with lip and tongue map. Visual perception helps Mandarin learners understand the correct tongue position and pronounce the right pronunciation easily.

Using gesture can turn the abstract concept into the concrete one. Mandarin learners find it difficult to pronounce the five intonations of Chinese characters precisely. In traditional Mandarin teaching, Mandarin teachers draw the tone chart for Mandarin learners, but students cannot understand the abstract tone charts with numbers. However, Mandarin teachers with the application of multimodal teaching use gestures to show how five intonations pronounce. For example, Mandarin teachers make the horizontal gesture to indicate the first intonation of Mandarin and then ask students to follow the gesture to pronounce. As for the second intonation of Mandarin, Mandarin teachers can show the rising gesture to lead Mandarin learners to pronounce. Mandarin learners understand the meaning of the gesture and they pronounce the correct pronunciation easily because they see the concrete gesture. The third Mandarin intonation is difficult to pronounce accurately. Mandarin learners see the falling gesture firstly and then rising gesture when Mandarin teachers explain the third intonation. From the vivid gesture explanation, Mandarin learners probably pronounce the third intonation. Moreover, Mandarin learners can pronounce the fourth intonation easily based on the falling gesture. Gesture teaching method is a good way to improve the study efficiency of Mandarin learners. It is explicit to know the Mandarin stress when Mandarin teachers use gesture to explain the paragraph reading skills. Mandarin learners master the Mandarin stress with specific gesture quickly.

In summary, the multimodal teaching including using videos and gestures not only helps Mandarin learners pronounce the Chinese characters accurately but makes the Mandarin phonetic teaching vividly and efficiently.

2.2 Multimodal Teaching Applied in Mandarin Vocabulary Teaching

Mandarin vocabulary Teaching is an important part of Mandarin teaching. The form of vocabulary teaching is single, and students are negative to remember words and use words in traditional Mandarin vocabulary classes [13]. The multimodal teaching applied to Mandarin teaching solves problems of Mandarin vocabulary classes. The application of multimodal vocabulary teaching is divided into using pictures and using situational methods to help students master Mandarin vocabulary.

Using pictures is an intuitive teaching method of Mandarin vocabulary. Pictures help Mandarin learners understand the meaning of new words because Mandarin learners can combine pictures and the meaning of words. From pictures, Mandarin learners can mobilize the vision and hearing when they study new words. The mobilization of multiple senses promotes words learning. In class, Mandarin teachers use pictures to ask students some questions in order to explain the meaning of words especially for abstract words. For example, the word “furniture” in Mandarin is hard to understand. Mandarin

learners cannot understand the explanation of the furniture. However, the picture of the furniture simplifies the explanation of furniture and students can understand this word quickly. Besides, pictures can lead Mandarin learners to practice the usage of new words. For example, Mandarin teachers can use the picture of a book on the table to explain the word “put” and guide students to speak this word in a sentence with the help of the picture. It is efficient to master new words by activating the multiple senses. Moreover, colourful pictures can arouse the enthusiasm of learning Mandarin. Mandarin learners feel bored and tired with the monotonous tone of Mandarin teachers in traditional Mandarin vocabulary classes. However, Mandarin learners can follow the picture to master new words.

Another multimodal teaching method in Mandarin vocabulary teaching is to create the real situation for students to understand the new words. Mandarin learners are easier to understand new words in the real situation. It is natural to use the new words when Mandarin learners face the true situation in the daily life. For example, Mandarin learners find it hard to understand the usage of Mandarin adverb “immediately”. Based on that situation, Mandarin teachers provide the real situation that is about waiting for a friend to go shopping for hours and then calls a friend. The friend says he will come immediately. Therefore, Mandarin learners know the usage of new words at once. Besides, Mandarin learners can participate in class when they conceive the real situation. From activities of creating the conversation in real situation, Mandarin learners have different thoughts about making up the situation and they should grasp the meaning of new words to design the reasonable situation. The situational teaching is a student-centered teaching method and make students engaged in class. Meanwhile, Mandarin learners not only enhance the usage of new words but practice their spoken language. In the process of creating the situation, Mandarin learners mobilize the sense of hearing and speaking to understand new words deeply.

Based on the discussion, the multimodal teaching including using pictures and the situational teaching makes Mandarin vocabulary concise, easy to understand and increases study passion of students.

2.3 Multimodal Teaching Applied in Mandarin Grammar Teaching

Mandarin grammar is difficult for Mandarin learners to understand and use correctly. Mandarin grammar is systematic, and it is hard for Mandarin learners to understand the sequence of Mandarin. In traditional Mandarin grammar teaching classes, Mandarin teachers teach Mandarin grammar without multimedia [14]. It is tough to connect the unlearned vocabulary with Mandarin grammar. However, the multimodal Mandarin grammar teaching is divided into using animation and using the sentence template to activate the vision and hearing.

Using animation is concise to explain the abstract grammar. Mandarin learners can mobilize their senses and understand the Mandarin grammar when the animation connects the language structure and language message. For example, the animation can explain the grammar of Chinese adverb “le”. If “le” is put in the end of the sentence, it means something changes. Mandarin teachers use the multimedia to make dynamic pictures of the weather from sunny to rainy. Therefore, Mandarin learners know how to use Chinese adverb “le” when they see the changes of pictures. It is lucid to explain

the usage of the abstract grammar. From the application of the animation in the Mandarin grammar teaching, Mandarin learners are easy to speak in correctly by following dynamic pictures. As for the practice of Mandarin, Mandarin learners can gain confidence when they speak correctly by seeing the dynamic pictures from direct perspective. Moreover, the application of animation creates the good studying atmosphere. Mandarin learners can interact with Mandarin teachers when they understand the meaning of Mandarin grammar. For example, Mandarin teachers use animation to explain the usage of Chinese preposition “ba” and they lead Mandarin learners to answer questions when Mandarin learners see the animation used in the movement of the object. Based on the interaction, Mandarin teachers know the knowledge mastery of Mandarin learners.

Using the sentence template is an effective teaching method to master the basic grammar. The chart of the Mandarin grammar triggers the vision of students because Mandarin learners can remember the layout of the Mandarin sentence template. In each unit of the textbook, Mandarin teachers divide each module in the sentence template. Mandarin learners can add words in each module, and they know the sequence of Mandarin. For example, Mandarin learners express their feelings following the sequence of the sentence and they have the deep impression of the correct sequence to minimize the possibility of making mistakes. From the sentence template, it is advantageous to remember the right sequence of Mandarin and they can express in a complete sentence rather than saying one word by word. Moreover, Mandarin learners understand the sentence with real situation when Mandarin teachers give example concluding the formula of regular sentences. Therefore, Mandarin learners understand and remember this formula to practice. During the practice process, Mandarin learners are autonomous to create different situations to enhance the grammar. Sentence template connects the language meanings and language structure to explain the Mandarin grammar.

In summary, the multimodal teaching including using animation and using the sentence template is conducive to Mandarin grammar teachers. Mandarin learners receive the intuitive and vivid explanations of the abstract grammar with the multimodal teaching.

2.4 Multimodal Teaching Applied in Mandarin Character Teaching

Mandarin character teaching is the most difficult to Mandarin as a second language learners. In traditional Mandarin character teaching classes, Mandarin teachers spend much time on tracing instead of teaching students the basic rules of Mandarin teaching, which only makes learners learn and memorize each Chinese character as a specific picture [15]. Also, the number of Mandarin character is large. However, the multimodal Mandarin character teaching is divided into using fingers to simulate the Mandarin stroke order and using the Tianzige to analyse the Mandarin character structure. Tianzige refers to the template to standardize the writing format of Chinese characters including quadrangle, horizontal and vertical center line for Mandarin beginners.

Using fingers to simulate the Mandarin stroke order can arouse the body memory and deepen the impression of Mandarin character order. Mandarin learners find that the Mandarin characters are similar to the picture, and they do not notice the Mandarin stroke order. The method of using fingers to write is easy to figure out the Mandarin stroke order and arouses the passion of Mandarin learners when Mandarin teachers play the Mandarin

character explanation video because Mandarin learners mobilize the action and vision. The multi-sensory mobilization helps Mandarin learners understand and remember Mandarin characters. For example, Mandarin teachers give the instruction of using fingers to simulate the complex Mandarin stroke order and Mandarin learners are interested in writing Mandarin characters with fingers. Moreover, the Mandarin character teaching with fingers enriches teaching methods and increases the interaction between Mandarin teachers and students. Mandarin learners can ask questions to Mandarin teachers when they do not understand why this Mandarin stroke should be written at first while writing with fingers. The interaction improves the learning quality of Mandarin learners.

Using the Tianzige to analyse the Mandarin character structure is the straight teaching method to understand because the Tianzige helps Mandarin learners split the structure of Mandarin characters. In Mandarin system, the combined characters accounts for 96%. Therefore, the analysis of the combination rules of the combined characters parts is an important method in the Chinese characters teaching [15]. Tianzige divides each part of Mandarin characters. Mandarin learners can see the structure of Mandarin characters clearly because Tianzige simplifies the structure of Mandarin characters. Moreover, using Tianzige helps students to solidify types of Mandarin character structure. The types of Mandarin character structure are left-right structure, up-down structure and fully enclosed structure. From enhancing the knowledge of Mandarin character structure, Mandarin learners distinguish the differences between pictures and Mandarin characters. For example, Mandarin learners are active to analyse the Mandarin character structure in Tianzige when they see the new Mandarin characters.

Based on the discussion, the multimodal teaching including using fingers to simulate the Mandarin stroke order and using the Tianzige to analyse the Mandarin character structure can inspire the multi-senses of Mandarin learners, and Mandarin learners can deepen the impression of the stroke order of Mandarin characters. Mandarin learners are enthusiastic to study the Mandarin characters and understand the structure of Mandarin characters with the multimodal Mandarin character teaching.

3 Conclusion

Nowadays, Mandarin learning methods are various. Mandarin learners try different Mandarin learning methods. However, they fail to have the best learning effect. The multimodal Mandarin teaching is conducive to study Mandarin based on the above discussion. The application of multimodal Mandarin teaching can not only improve the Mandarin comprehensive ability of Mandarin learners but also inspire the passion of learning Mandarin of students. Therefore, the multimodal Mandarin teaching is worthwhile to explore, and Mandarin learners can gain confidence when they master the Mandarin new knowledge.

As for the application of multimodal Mandarin phonetic teaching, Mandarin learners can deepen the impression of Mandarin pronunciation by using gestures and videos. Although Mandarin learners are affected by their own language, they can pronounce standard Mandarin when Mandarin teachers explain four Mandarin intonation by gestures. Using gestures and videos can solidify and simplify the abstract Mandarin phonetic knowledge. From the process of studying Mandarin with the multimodal teaching methods, Mandarin learners are positive to practice their pronunciation of Mandarin because

they are engaged in the Mandarin classes and activate the multiple senses led by the application of multimodal teaching.

As for the application of multimodal Mandarin vocabulary teaching, Mandarin learners can connect pictures and new Mandarin words. Moreover, Mandarin learners can understand the meaning of Mandarin vocabulary when they have the real situation background because Mandarin learners can establish the relationship between their previous experience and the new Mandarin vocabulary. Although Mandarin vocabulary has many hidden meanings based on the Chinese culture, Mandarin teachers can use pictures to clarify the correct usage of Mandarin words clearly and teach Mandarin learners Chinese culture virtually. In Mandarin classes, Mandarin teachers invite Mandarin learners to create the conversation based on the real situation and Mandarin learners have opportunities to apply the new Mandarin vocabulary under the real situation. It is a good way to check Mandarin learners whether they master the new vocabulary.

As for the application of multimodal Mandarin grammar teaching, using the animation and the sentence template can make the Mandarin grammar easy to understand. Mandarin learners do not have huge pressure after watching the animation and they are keen on studying Mandarin grammar with vivid explanation. The sentence template can give Mandarin learners instructions to create new sentences followed by the given sentence. From the given sentence, Mandarin learners can analyse the Mandarin sentence structure and simulate more similar sentences to grasp the Mandarin grammar.

As for the application of multimodal Mandarin character teaching, using fingers to simulate the Mandarin stroke order and using the Tianzige to analyse the Mandarin character structure are the most effective method to write the Mandarin characters. Mandarin characters are the most difficult part of the Mandarin teaching because Mandarin learners regard the Mandarin characters as pictures. Therefore, using fingers can help Mandarin learners know the correct Mandarin stroke order and have the better understanding of the traits of Mandarin characters. Moreover, Tianzige provides the clear Mandarin character structure, and it is explicit to master the Mandarin character.

The multimodal Mandarin teaching is worth exploring in the future. Mandarin teachers can apply multimodal Mandarin teaching methods deeply and naturally into the Mandarin teaching. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the skill of the application of multimodal Mandarin teaching.

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