

# The Key Chinese Language Teaching Methodologies

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**Abstract – Foreign language teaching is gaining popularity in recent years. However it is not easy to teach foreign language through second language. Very often students coming from different background with different mother tongues sit under one roof to learn foreign language. To be a successful foreign language teacher, one must first know the goals of the learners then only effective methodologies can be adopted. The goal of school student's university students and professional's learners cannot be put in one single box. Hence we need to different approaches while dealing with different personals of the society. There are three teaching methods that dominate language teaching: the Direct Method, the Grammar-Translation Method, and the Audio-Lingual Method. The nature of a student's goals and characteristics feature of the target language will determine which is best to follow while teaching.**

**In the late last century Indian students were very keen to learn French and German. This led to the establishment of Alliance Francaise to learn French and Max Mueller Bhavan for German in India. However in the new century the scenario is somewhat different. The rise of China as global power has given new hopes and aspiration to young Indian students to learn Chinese language. Hence this paper will try to find the best possible methods to teach Chinese language in India especially in Universities.**

**Keywords: Chinese Language, Indian Students, Methods and Approaches.**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION:

In India being bilingual or multilingual is not at all considered to be exceptional, rather it is very common. Being a multilingual society almost every single person speaks at least two Indian languages, with basic knowledge of English. English is also widely spoken across the country and not considered as a foreign language. The notion, that childhood is the best time to learn a foreign language has now been challenged by technologies and other scientific tools. In the era of globalization irrespective of age it has become a need to know at least one foreign language. The ability to speak a foreign language gives unique benefit to the learner. Broadly speaking learning foreign language has three major benefits: cognitive benefits, academic benefits and social benefits.

### 1.1 Cognitive Benefits:

Learning a language means excising the brain. Thus, learning a language is one of the most effective and practical ways to enhance intelligence, keep mind sharp, and buffer brain against aging. Learning a language also helps the learner to think divergently.

A monolingual speaker can only relate his thought process to the culture and language he or she is familiar with. Whereas a multilingual speaker can divergently think of a particular issue. This also enhances his creativity and thus can resolve certain issues much effectively.

### 1.2 Academic Benefits:

Learning another language enhances academic skills. It increases one's reading and writing ability. In the year 1994 magnet schools in the Kansas City Public Schools reported that students in the language magnet's first kindergarten, starting in the program in 1988, had surpassed national averages in all subjects by the time they reached fifth grade. The more brain is used the better it works. Language learning keeps the brain active and sharpens the memory.

### 1.3 Social Benefits:

In India people who can speak foreign language is considered to be an asset to the society. With Indian companies emerging as global players and Indian market being eyed by multinational

companies the demand of foreign language professionals to facilitate smooth communication for proper business transactions is high. India is engaged with foreign trade with many countries; hence the foreign language experts are in high demand in the present society. Besides the telecommunication industries wants its employees to communicate worldwide.

In whole the foreign language will carry the learners far beyond the classroom. It gives an exceptional opportunity to know the culture, civilization of another society making themselves a global citizen.

## 2. HISTORY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING:

Language teaching method has undergone a series of changes throughout the history. The language teaching method is directly proportional to the goals and needs of the learners. Now the goals and needs are quite different from the goals and needs of the learners of the previous centuries. In the sixteen-seventeen century learners used to learn a foreign language to know the literature, history, culture and civilization of a particular country. Study of new culture, civilization through their language used to give a profound understanding of that particular society. In other words knowledge of foreign language was a medium to carry out research work. In research work reading proficiency was preferred over oral proficiency. In order to have a better reading proficiency rigorous emphasis was put on grammar. Once a learner used to attend a certain proficiency of grammar, then further grammatical construction were introduced to have a deeper understanding of the language. Basic grammar text book with examples and translation from the source language to target language or vice-versa were followed to teach foreign languages. Written exercise, translation, used to be an important component of the curriculum. However with change of the goals of the learners in the era of globalization where oral proficiency was preferred over reading proficiency, the teaching methodology has also undergone certain change. Oral proficiency skill helps one to deal the real life situation effectively. It needs vocabulary knowledge and narrative abilities.

## 3. CHINESE LANGUAGE AND ITS POPULARITY IN INDIA:

In the ever expanding world of trade and commerce, India is one of the most valued and biggest trade partners of China. Both China and India offers excellent investment opportunities to the investors. India's low cost wage service has given rise to more interest to the investors to invest in India. The low wage factor has also lead China to invest in India especially under "make in India" initiative. The Chinese companies are also coming up with tailor-made products to capture the Indian market. The mushrooming of Chinese companies has benefited

the students and professionals who are well versed in Chinese language. Under such scenario more and more Indian students and professionals are realizing the economic realities, opportunities and opting for the language of the dragon country. Learners competent in both English and Chinese have the opportunity to fetch high salary. Seeing the ongoing demand of the Chinese language experts in India the government has also started establishing Chinese centers in different Central Universities. However private universities are also not lagging behind and are giving a tough competition to the central universities.

## 4. DIFFICULTIES OF CHINESE LANGUAGE:

English has 26 alphabets, grasping the alphabets help to make words and phrases. Whereas Chinese is radically different from English, being a non-alphabetic language. It is rather a pictographic language where each symbol or picture represents one word, concept or idea. An English word can be easily pronounced by looking at it, where it is impossible to even a guess a word if one is not familiar with the character of that particular word. Being a non-phonetic language, there is no relation between the pronunciation and physical appearance of the character.<sup>2</sup> Thus there lies a lot of difference in speaking, reading and writing. Although all languages have certain differences between speaking, reading and writing but no language has a distance as large as in Chinese language.<sup>3</sup>

## 5. CURRENT CHINESE TEACHING TRENDS IN INDIA:

A good teacher is generous in sharing knowledge, time, and has passion for their subject. Very often students coming from different background with different mother tongue sit under one roof to learn foreign language. Irrespective of learners background a good teacher makes all possible efforts to imbibe the knowledge in learners mind. To be a successful foreign language teacher, one must first know the goals and needs of the learners. The goal and needs of school students, university students and professional's learners cannot be put in one single box. Hence we need to different approaches while dealing with different personals of the society. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century technology plays a very pivotal role in Foreign Language Teaching. However, as per the needs of the learners sometimes the traditional teaching methods are also followed in day to day teaching. There are three teaching methods that dominate language teaching even today: the Direct Method,

<sup>2</sup> [http://sino-platonic.org/complete/spp102\\_teach\\_chinese.html](http://sino-platonic.org/complete/spp102_teach_chinese.html)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

the Grammar-Translation Method, and the Audio-Lingual Method.

### 5.1 Direct Method:

Chinese language is considered to be the toughest language on the earth. The tones and the unique speech sound of the language is a challenge for both the learners and instructors. However in course of teaching direct method to grasp the tones has been proved to be very effective. The theoretical knowledge how to pronounce the tones stresses the learners mind. The theoretical knowledge forces the students to pay attention to manner of articulation rather than articulation. Hence in order to avoid the diversion, theoretical knowledge should be avoided while dealing with tones. However while dealing with speech sound, the brief introduction of the manner of articulation of the syllables enabled the learners to pronounce accurately. Once the tones and speech sound part is done, then comes the real language learning part which includes vocabularies and sentences. Direct methods are one of the best methods in Chinese language teaching. It helps the learners to connect directly with the target language without any translation. Direct method demands attentive listeners and a good listener grasp the language faster. Active participation in class room activities enables students to use the language then and there. The instructions and other related activities in the target languages keep the learners active and alert engaging themselves in the target language. The frequent use of the target language helps them to remember the vocabularies and other elements fast. Direct method involves lot of gesture, action and demonstration. The explanation through gesture and action sometimes is a real challenge to the instructors. This teaching method is also called Total Physical Response (TRP) method. In this method the instructor need to build a coordination of speech sound and action.<sup>4</sup> This teaching method was coined by James Asher, a professor in psychology at San Jose State University, California. Learner's brain registers language elements faster when they learn it through gesture and demonstration. This method helps a lot to enhance the oral proficiency of the learner. Other than gesture and action the usage of objects also make the teaching effective. Easily available objects like books, pen, pencil, table, chairs can be used to introduce to the learners. With the passage of time the instructor need to collect some object of his own to make teaching more interesting. Play cards, charts, blocks, posters can also form teaching material for the beginners.

### 5.2 Grammar-Translation Method:

Grammar-Translation methods have a different target and goal to fulfill. It is a method of study which

<sup>4</sup> Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*

gives emphasis to grammar rules. This method gives more emphasis to reading and writing. This methods suit to the learners who has a goal to carry out research work. In this method grammar is being taught and then the grammatical rules are tested through sentence constructions and translation. This method helps to learners to enhance knowledge of the language rather than oral communication. Here the usage of source language is more as compared to target language. In other words this method involves, learning of target language through source language. In Chinese language grammar-translation method is followed after the learner reaches a certain level of proficiency. Through this method the learners are also trained for professional translation and interpretations.

### 5.3 Audio-Lingual Method:

According to few analysts Audio-Lingual teaching method is a new variant of direct method. Now a day's technology plays a very major role in teaching foreign language. The classes are being conducted in Language laboratory. Audio tape and visual aids are mainly used to make the teaching easy. However with advent of new online applications, the usage of audio-visual tapes has reduced tremendously. Audio-visual clippings are easily available in the internet. The situational based clippings help the learners to learn dialogue more efficiently. Vocabularies or grammatical rule are being taught through some small video clippings. Through the clippings the learners are also exposed to voice rather pronunciation of the native Chinese speakers. The situational dialogue helps them improve their conversational skill. Besides, movie is also an integral part of audio-visual teaching method. Movies not only help the learners to improve their oral proficiency but help one to understand the situation of the society. It also helps to understand the lexicon, semantics & cultural understanding of the language. Classroom teaching method helps the students to understand the vocabularies and sentence structure, but movie classes help them to understand the various applications of the vocabularies and phrases at accurate place.

“看电影说汉语” (Speak Chinese through movies) published by East China Normal University, Shanghai, especially designed for the foreigners to learn the language through movies. The book contain a DVD consists four different short movies which are being further divided into few chapters. Each chapter has few key words and some explanations of the few scenes of the movie. The students are shown the movie as per the chapter and then asked to narrate or write the story keeping in mind each and every minute details of every scene and using the key words provided in the chapter. Teachers also help students with the narration of the scenes and correct the wrong sentences of the students. Chapters having

Complex Sentences are explained in the book with examples. Students not only learn how to express themselves but also learn the various techniques to express the very same idea using different constructions.

In course of teaching another thing has been noticed that, in the beginning the students face a lot of difficulties while watching Chinese movies, and because of that they sometime lose interest and attention. Hence introducing the dubbed Indian movies in Chinese really attracts them and they are very much eager to learn the famous Hindi dialogues in Chinese. This keeps their attention intact more as compared to when they are shown Chinese movies. Thus they charismatically develop the skills of oral and written narration. In the later stage Chinese movie is being introduced to make them understand socio-cultural scenario of the Chinese society.

These are the three methods which I follow to teach my students. As per my personal experience after the introduction of audio-lingual method a significant improvement has been marked in the performance of the learners. It has become relatively easier for the students to clear the level test of Chinese language (HSK-汉语水平考试) conducted by government of China.

## 6. CONCLUSION:

There is no single method to teach foreign language. All the languages have different characteristics feature. A teacher need to keep in mind two vital points before implementing any particular method: characteristics feature of the language and needs of the learners. In Chinese language besides different methods implemented by the teacher for effective teaching, students also have to put a lot of hard work to learn the language. The teacher can help the learners to improve the oral and reading skill. However when it comes to writing part, the students have to practice characters with proper stroke order by themselves. There is no shortcut of learn the Chinese characters. Everyday 4-5 hours characters practice is mandatory to keep right pace with class. Besides, this 4-5 hours of character practicing, the students have to take out time to practice the reading comprehension and grammar. The learners are also given the audio tape or MP3 version to listen the recoding of the text. Hence the efforts from both the side are expected to make the learning effective.

With the growing demand of Chinese language it is expected that in near future more and more universities will offer Chinese language program. Chinese government is also trying its best to make Chinese language the most widely spoken language in the world surpassing English.

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