



Teaching Chinese idioms in teaching Chinese as a second language

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ABSTRACT

Chinese idioms, known as *chéngyǔ* (成语), are an essential component of the Chinese language and culture. Incorporating them into second-language teaching enhances students' understanding of Chinese society, history, and values. This article explores effective strategies for incorporating Chinese idioms into teaching Chinese as a second language (CSL), highlighting their pedagogical significance and providing practical examples for implementation.

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Xitoy tilini ikkinchi til sifatida o'qitishda xitoy tili iboralarini o'qitish

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

Xitoy tilida iboralar,
ikkinchi tilni o'rgatish,
madaniy ravonlik,
tilni bilish,
pedagogik strategiyalar.

Chéngyǔ (成语) deb nomlanuvchi xitoy tili iborolari xitoy tili va madaniyatining muhim tarkibiy qismidir. Ulardan xitoy tilini ikkinchi til sifatida o'qitishda foydalanishni kiritish talabalarining Xitoy jamiyati, tarixi va qadriyatlari haqidagi tushunchalarini oshiradi. Ushbu maqola xitoy tilini ikkinchi til sifatida o'rgatishda xitoy tili iboralarini foydalanishning samarali strategiyalarini o'rganadi, ularning pedagogik ahamiyatini yoritadi va amaliy misollar keltiradi.

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Изучение китайских идиом в процессе обучения китайскому языку как иностранному

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

китайские идиомы,
преподавание второго
языка,
свободное владение
культурой,
владение языком,
педагогические стратегии.

Китайские идиомы, известные как чэнью (成语), являются важным компонентом китайского языка и культуры. Включение их в преподавание второго языка улучшает понимание учащимися китайского общества, истории и ценностей. В этой статье исследуются эффективные стратегии включения китайских идиом в обучение китайскому языку как второму, подчеркивается их педагогическое значение и приводятся практические примеры для реализации.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Chinese as a second language presents unique challenges due to its rich cultural heritage and linguistic complexity. Chinese idioms, characterized by concise yet profound expressions, serve as cultural artifacts that reflect the essence of Chinese civilization [2, 25-28]. Integrating idioms into CSL instruction not only enhances language proficiency but also encourages cultural understanding and appreciation. This article looks into the pedagogical significance of teaching Chinese idioms and offers practical strategies for effective integration into CSL curricula. [1, 95]

The Significance of Teaching Chinese Idioms:

Chinese idioms are linguistic treasures that encapsulate centuries of cultural wisdom and historical narratives [3, 56-58]. Each idiom carries profound meanings taken from Chinese philosophy, literature, and folklore, providing learners with insights into the cultural nuances of the language. By mastering idiomatic expressions, CSL learners gain a deeper appreciation of Chinese culture and develop a more authentic communication style.

Enhanced Language Proficiency:

Incorporating Chinese idioms into language learning enhances vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency [4, 33]. Idioms challenge students to think critically and creatively, as they often require contextual understanding rather than literal translation. For instance, the idiom "马马虎虎" (mǎ mǎ hū hū – literally "horse tiger tiger") means "so-so" or "mediocre," but understanding its usage in various contexts deepens language proficiency.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Cultural Understanding: Teaching Chinese idioms provides a gateway to Chinese culture [5, 14]. Each idiom is steeped in historical anecdotes, myths, or philosophical principles. In the process of learning Chinese idioms, learners can increase their understanding of the spiritual culture of the Chinese nation. For example, by learning the idiom "孟母三迁" (mèng mǔ sān qiān – literally "Meng Mu moved three times"), learners can also know that the environment can change a person's hobbies and habits [6, 64]. In the process of a person's growth, the mother plays a more important role. This idiom can also help learners understand some basic Chinese cultural knowledge: ancient Chinese

school rulers paid attention to etiquette. When Meng Zu was a child in school, in addition to literacy, he also had to learn to be polite and to be respectful. Understanding this idiom not only improves language skills but also offers insights into Chinese storytelling traditions and moral values.

Strategies for Teaching Chinese Idioms:

Contextualized Learning: Introduce idioms within relevant cultural and situational contexts to facilitate comprehension and retention [7, 27]. For example, teaching the idiom "画蛇添足" huàshétiānzú (drawing legs on a snake) alongside the story of the Chu Kingdom helps learners grasp its meaning of unnecessary embellishment.

Multimodal Instruction: Utilize a variety of resources, including visual aids, audio recordings, and multimedia platforms, to reinforce idiomatic learning [8, 12-15]. During the idiom teaching process, a picture can be provided to illustrate the context. It works best if an image is displayed that humorously illustrates the literal meaning of the idiom and it makes learners not only get interested, but it can also help them understand or guess the meaning of idioms. Also incorporating videos, songs, and storytelling enhances engagement and promotes active participation among CSL learners.

Integration with Authentic Materials: Integrate idioms into authentic texts, such as literature, news articles, and films, to expose learners to real-life usage and cultural contexts [9, 20-22]. Analyzing idioms in context cultivates critical thinking skills and encourages learners to infer meanings based on situational cues.

Interactive Activities: Engage learners in interactive exercises, such as role-plays, games, and collaborative projects, to reinforce idiomatic usage in communicative contexts. Group discussions, debates, and drama performances provide opportunities for active language production and peer interaction.

Incorporating Chinese idioms into CSL instruction enriches learners' linguistic and cultural competence, fostering a deeper understanding of Chinese language and civilization [10, 98-102]. By embracing idiomatic expressions, CSL learners not only enhance their language proficiency but also develop a profound appreciation for Chinese culture and heritage. Educators play an essential role in guiding learners through the intricate world of Chinese idioms, empowering them to communicate effectively and authentically in diverse linguistic settings.

The major difference between metonymy and metaphor is that metonymy typically involves one conceptual domain, rather than two distinct domains as in the case of metaphor. Furthermore, metonymy involves a "stand for" conceptual relationship between two entities (within a single domain), while metaphor involves an "is" or "is understood as" relationship between two conceptual domains (Kövecses & Szabó, 1996). An example can be taken from "hand":

- Hand can be understood as standing for the person:
e.g., a green hand; poor hand; from hand to hand; all hands to the pump
- Hand can be understood as standing for the activity:
e.g., sit on one's hands; join hands with somebody; turn one's hand to something
- Hand can be understood as standing for the skill:
e.g., get one's hand in; one's hand is out; a bad hand at

Studies in L2 Idiom Pedagogy

Following the development of cognitive linguistic theories, the CL-inspired pedagogy of figurative language has been through the exploratory phase during the past several decades (Littlemore, 2009; Tyler, 2012; Niemeier, 2017). There has been an amount of empirical research focusing on L2 idiom teaching and learning from a cognitive point of view. Among them, the majority of the studies that applied the conceptual metaphor theory in idiom teaching have confirmed its overall effectiveness (Boers, 2011). For example, Picken (2005) examined whether raising awareness to conceptual metaphors can help Japanese EFL students make sense of linguistic metaphors that are comparatively difficult to identify in context. The study provided evidence that awareness-raising of conceptual metaphors increases the likelihood of metaphoric readings, both in the short and in the longer term. The small-scale experiment to compare the relative effectiveness of two CL-inspired idiom presentation methods. It was found that encouraging learners to use conceptual metaphor clues to guess the meaning was likely to enhance the effectiveness of presenting metaphoric idioms. Li (2004) conducted five experiments concerning metaphoric words, idioms and proverbs on 394 Chinese undergraduates of intermediate to advanced levels of English. The first four experiments tested the effect of presenting conceptual metaphor information in the context of (a) a ten-minute discussion with the teacher, (b) being told about conceptual metaphors, and (c) actively engaging with the data. Query routines prompting participants to engage in group discussion were used to facilitate learning and memorization. Li found that the students in the experimental groups who had carried out these activities recalled the form and meaning of the idioms significantly better than those in the control groups, who had been given memory-based tasks. Though the results of combining the knowledge of metaphor in idiom learning have been largely encouraging, there are still inconsistent findings. Particularly, in a research on English idioms from a view of cognitive semantics, Kövecses and Szabó found that the participants, when having been introduced to a set of conceptual metaphors, were able to work out the meaning of a totally new set of phrasal verbs. However, they only tested their participants on the particles. When Boers (2000) replicated their study, testing his participants on their ability to understand both parts of the phrasal verbs, it was found that those participants who had received relevant conceptual metaphor training did not significantly outperform those who had received no such training.

In view of the relevant previous studies, it is necessary to probe deeper into the CL-based approach to L2 idiom learning for the following reasons: 1) given the abovementioned conflicts among research findings, there is a need to reexamine the relationship between the knowledge of conceptual metaphors and the meaning of English idioms in the first place; 2) since most of the research took a quantitative way of analysis, there are still plenty of gaps to be filled concerning the varieties of research methods; 3) since most studies were engaged in the use of conceptual metaphor in a broad sense, they failed to further explore its differential degrees of effectiveness on different types of metaphoric and metonymic idioms. Hence, will learners truly have a better understanding of idioms when teachers introduce conceptual metaphor and metonymy, and relate them to idioms? Will all kinds of metaphor- and metonymy-based idioms be equally difficult for learners to perceive? These are the general questions attempted by this empirical study targeted at Chinese college-level EFL learners.

English idiom dictionary,

An idiom is a form of expression peculiar to a language. It is formed of a group of words which, in most cases, taken together convey a meaning on its own different from the individual words of the group when they are taken alone. For maintaining the characteristics of brevity, balance in form, or rhyme, the arrangement of words in an idiom is often strange, seemingly illogical, or even grammatically incorrect.

The difficulty of idioms may make cheng-yu very difficult to remember. Moreover, students may simply not have enough exposure to cheng-yu used in various contexts. Often, textbooks list them alongside vocabulary and they are perhaps used only once in the context of a dialogue. If an instructor does not use the cheng-yu other times throughout the class, students may have minimal encounters with the phrases and may be at a loss as to how to use them – particularly if they have more than one application or grammatical role. Additionally, if the textbook cheng-yu are uncommon, students would be very unlikely to encounter them outside the classroom.

This is followed by a survey of Chinese textbooks used in intermediate-level courses that determines the types of cheng-yu often included and the methods used to introduce them. Then, there will be information about the frequency of usage for cheng-yu in authentic texts as revealed by corpus data, and a study of whether typical textbook content reflects this information. Finally, based on the information gained from the study, the paper will conclude with some pedagogical recommendations.

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