

Research on the Use of Teaching Aids in Cross-Strait International Chinese Language Education

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ABSTRACT

The study makes an in-depth investigation on the use of teaching aids of ICLE teachers and the market of teaching aids of ICLE between mainland China and Chinese Taiwan. It shows that in the modern ICLE classroom, almost all of the teachers will use teaching aids to assist Chinese teaching. Teachers prefer to use many kinds of teaching aids, including both traditional teaching aids and modern audio-visual teaching aids. Among them, the most frequently used teaching aids are multimedia devices, photos and material objects. In the marketplace, the ready market of ICLE teaching aids cannot fully meet the needs of the teachers for teaching aids and most of the teachers need to rely on self-made teaching aids for teaching. Based on the above study, it believes that the main direction of the development of teaching aids in the future is still the coexistence of different types and diversities. In the research and development of teaching aids, we need to adhere to the principle of combining imitation and innovation, and gradually establish a mature market mechanism for teaching aids in ICLE.

KEYWORDS

ICLE; teaching aids; mainland China; Chinese Taiwan

1 Introduction

The use of teaching aids has emerged since the beginning of human teaching activities. The "Modern Chinese Dictionary" (Seventh Edition) points out that "teaching aids generally refer to models, objects, diagrams, and slides used to explain and illustrate certain things or objects during teaching, mainly used as auxiliary teaching materials."^[1]

According to Piaget's cognitive development theory, education should provide students with a wealth of rich, real-world activities in which students can interact with the environment spontaneously and autonomously discover knowledge.^[2] Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) is a unique mode of communication and interaction between mediators (parents, teachers, peers, etc.) and learners. It has two basic meanings: (1) Regulate learning—"Regulated learning" is in contrast to "unregulated learning". Direct learning is unregulated learning, while indirect learning is regulated learning. (2) Learning experience—According to the MLE theory, there are two types of learning experiences for learners, one is based on regulated learning experiences, and the other is unregulated learning experiences.^[4] In the classroom, "Regulated learning" largely relies on appropriate teaching aids to be achieved.

Teaching aids can be classified into various types according to different standards and classification methods.^[5-8] Homemade teaching aids are beneficial for improving the quality and effectiveness of teaching. In teaching practice, teachers should cleverly create teaching aids and make good use of them to fully engage students' enthusiasm.^[9-10] Teaching aids have a wide range of

applications, and when there are grammatical or other obvious errors, teachers or other classmates can consciously correct them.^[11]

Based on the research of the scholars mentioned above, we can see that different types of teaching aids have different effects in different types of classrooms, and their role in assisting teaching should not be overlooked. Therefore, this article intends to explore the following research questions through a questionnaire survey of international Chinese teachers in both sides of the Taiwan Strait and combined with actual market research:

(1) What type of teaching aids do international Chinese teachers in mainland China and Taiwan prefer to use?

(2) What characteristics do Chinese teachers on both sides of the strait value more when choosing teaching aids?

(3) What is the current situation of the international Chinese teaching materials market across the Taiwan Strait? How do teachers mainly acquire teaching aids?

The study hopes that this can clarify the current situation of the use of teaching aids in international Chinese teaching between the two sides, provide ideas and directions for teachers to choose and develop appropriate teaching aids in the future, and provide a certain reference for research in the field of international Chinese teaching aids.

2 Survey on the Use of Teaching Aids for International Chinese Teaching Across the Taiwan Strait

Based on the background above, this article conducted a random questionnaire survey targeting teachers in mainland China and Taiwan who have experience teaching Chinese as a second language, aiming to understand the use of teaching aids by international Chinese teachers and their awareness of the current international Chinese teaching aids market. The questionnaire for this study was published online and can be filled out on both PC and mobile client through the Wenjuanxing platform. A total of 146 valid questionnaires were collected, with 126 female respondents and 20 male respondents, mostly young teachers (aged 18-40), accounting for 86.31%. Out of all valid questionnaires, 140 participants, accounting for 95.89% of the total, reported using teaching aids in their Chinese language classes. Among the respondents, there are a total of 102 teachers from mainland China, accounting for 69.89%, and 44 teachers from Taiwan, accounting for 30.14%. Among the teachers surveyed in mainland China, 96 of them have used teaching aids for instructional purposes, while all 44 teachers from Taiwan have used teaching aids for instructional purposes. The detailed survey results of the specific teaching aids used by teachers in Chinese classrooms in mainland China and Taiwan are as follows (Table 1 & Table 2):

Table 1 Teaching aids usage among teachers in mainland China (multiple choice)

Options	Total (people)	Ratio	Options	Total (people)	Ratio
Multimedia devices	93	96.88%	Model	17	17.71%
New word card	70	72.92%	Instrument	1	1.04%
Chart	48	50%	Poker cards	13	13.54%
Photo	82	85.42%	Mahjong	2	2.08%
Physical	81	84.38%	Board games	6	6.25%
Specimen	0	0	Musical Instruments	16	16.67%
Other	11	11.46%			

According to statistics, the most frequently used teaching aid by teachers in mainland China is multimedia devices, with over 96% of teachers having records of using them in the classroom. Photos, physical objects, new word cards, and charts are arranged in columns 2 to 5, with more than

half of the users utilizing them. In Taiwan, the most commonly used teaching aids are multimedia devices and photos, accounting for 93.18%. Physical objects, new word cards, and charts are arranged in 3 to 5 columns. Based on the usage in both regions, this study found that the top 5 ranked teaching aids have consistency among teachers from both sides, while other teaching aids such as specimens and instruments, which are more related to STEM subjects, are rarely used in Chinese classrooms. Unlike teachers in mainland China, teachers in Taiwan do not have cases of using musical instruments as teaching aids. In the 'other' category, some teachers mentioned that they had used more unique teaching aids such as clay and tea sets.

Table 2 Use of teaching aids by teachers in Taiwan, China (multiple choice)

Options	Total (people)	Ratio	Options	Total (people)	Ratio
Multimedia devices	41	93.18%	Model	4	9.09%
New word card	32	72.73%	Instrument	2	4.55%
Chart	22	50%	Poker cards	16	36.36%
Photo	41	93.18%	Mahjong	1	2.27%
Physical	33	75%	Board games	3	6.82%
Specimen	1	2.27%	Musical Instruments	0	0
Other	6	13.64%			

When investigating the characteristics of teaching aids that Chinese teachers value more, mainland Chinese teachers value teaching aids that can attract students' interest the most, and can effectively combine "learning" and "playing". The next most valued characteristic is teaching aids that can save time and make the content learned by students clear at a glance. The same choice is also applicable among the group of teachers in Taiwan, with a similar proportion and no significant difference, indicating that teachers on both sides of the Taiwan Strait place more emphasis on the fun and timeliness of teaching aids when choosing teaching aids. When investigating the sources of teaching aids for teachers, this study found that there are certain differences between teachers from both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The top source of teaching aids for teachers on both sides of the strait is self-made, accounting for 84.38% and 93.18% respectively. The main difference in the data is mainly between purchasing in physical stores and purchasing online. Online shopping is more popular than shopping in physical stores in mainland China, while the opposite is true in Taiwan. The rapid development of e-commerce platforms in mainland China has made some teachers more inclined to choose time-saving and labor-saving online shopping channels.

This study also asked teachers about the correlation between the use of teaching aids and students' Chinese proficiency (whether the use of teaching aids can improve students' Chinese proficiency). The results showed that 85.29% of teachers in mainland China and 81.82% in Taiwan believe that using teaching aids appropriately can enhance students' Chinese proficiency. Overall, more than 80% of teachers agree that there is a positive correlation between the use of teaching aids and students' Chinese proficiency, while less than 20% of teachers believe that teaching aids are not helpful for students learning Chinese.

In a survey of market satisfaction, only 8.82% of teachers in mainland China believe that the current international Chinese teaching aids market can meet their classroom needs, while 19.61% of teachers hold the opposite view, believing that their needs for teaching aids have not been met. 71.57% of the teachers believe that the existing teaching materials for teaching Chinese as a foreign language can partially meet their needs. The three statistical data for Taiwan, China are 13.64%, 29.55%, and 56.82% respectively. The proportion of approval and disapproval is slightly higher than that in mainland China. Overall, the current international Chinese teaching aids market can to some extent meet teachers' needs for teaching aids, but the degree is limited, and there are still some teachers who cannot find the teaching aids they desire in the market.

The questionnaire aims to investigate the overall awareness and usage of teaching aids among

international Chinese teachers. Based on the results of this survey, the following basic conclusions can be drawn:

- (1) In modern international Chinese language teaching classrooms, almost all teachers will use teaching aids to assist in Chinese language teaching.
- (2) Chinese teachers use a wide variety of teaching aids, with traditional teaching aids and electronic teaching aids coexisting. Multimedia devices, photos, and physical teaching aids are used most frequently.
- (3) The current international Chinese teaching aids market cannot fully meet teachers' needs for teaching aids, and most teachers need to rely on self-made teaching aids for teaching.

3 Current Situation of the International Chinese Teaching Materials Market

Although there is a relatively complete international Chinese teaching material market in mainland China, with hundreds of types of teaching materials, the teaching aids market does not have a clear scale of operation. According to the survey results, the preferred teaching aids for international Chinese teachers are still self-made teaching aids, followed by purchasing online.

As popular online retail platforms in the Asia-Pacific region, Taobao, Pinduoduo, and Douyin online store are among the most popular e-commerce platforms in China and Chinese communities. Searching on Taobao, there are currently three items under the entry of "International Chinese Teaching Tools", including Pinyin flashcards, Chinese character spinners, and character recognition cards. When searching on Pinduoduo, there are currently three items under the entry of "International Chinese Teaching Tools", which are whiteboard stickers, sand writing board, and game cards. Searching in the Douyin online store, there are currently two items under the entry for "International Chinese Teaching Tools", which are magnetic stickers and Pinyin flashcards.

Overall, the products currently listed under the entry of "International Chinese Teaching Tools" mainly include two categories: word cards and magnetic tiles, all of which are traditional teaching tools. Can be used in teaching content such as "pinyin" and "Chinese characters". The clocks, coins, national flags, and other teaching aids widely used in the classroom do not appear in the keywords and can only be retrieved by entering keywords such as "preschool," "Chinese," and "elementary school."

Unlike in mainland China, due to the development of e-commerce and differences in consumer attitudes, international Chinese teachers in Taiwan tend to purchase teaching aids in physical stores rather than online. However, self-made teaching aids still account for the largest proportion. In some schools, some teaching aids are purchased centrally by the school, so teachers do not need to buy them themselves. Taking the Chinese Language Center at National Taiwan Normal University as an example, at the current stage, the language center provides a large number of flashcards and wall charts (mainly maps) for teachers to use in teaching.

In terms of acquiring teaching materials, international Chinese teachers in Taiwan have their own teaching materials exchange platform on Facebook called "Learning Chinese through Board Games". On this homepage, teachers will share information about teaching aids, whether they are homemade or classic teaching aids for sale. Teachers can find suitable teaching aids through this platform, and there will be workshops and exchange meetings on the use of teaching aids from time to time for teachers to exchange and learn. It can be called a miniature "teaching aids market". In mainland China, this study has not yet found a dedicated international Chinese teaching platform to provide communication convenience for Chinese teachers.

Overall, in the current international Chinese teaching aids market, teachers have a variety of channels to obtain teaching aids, but there is no so-called "international Chinese teaching aids

specialty store." The variety of products in the teaching aids market is relatively limited, so homemade teaching aids remain the main way for teachers to obtain teaching aids. With the continuous development of e-commerce platforms, more and more teaching aids will enter people's sight through online channels.

4 Prospects for the Use of International Chinese Teaching Aids

4.1 Teaching aids of different eras and types will coexist for a long time

Teaching aids have emerged along with educational activities and have gone through different stages of development from their origins to the present day. But this does not mean that multimedia teaching aids will replace traditional physical teaching aids, which have a longer history. Different teaching materials have different suitability requirements for teaching, and different teachers will make different choices of teaching aids due to differences in teaching levels and abilities. It is not accurate to simply say which era's teaching aids are outdated or advanced. Mou Jie also mentioned that as long as educational tools can vividly and interestingly activate and convey educational information, improve teaching efficiency, they are considered good and suitable.^[6]

Therefore, even in today's rapidly developing Internet era, many teachers still use traditional teaching aids such as flashcards, photos, and real objects to assist teaching. There is no research or evidence to show that traditional teaching aids are less effective than modern electronic teaching aids. Therefore, this study believes that different types of teaching aids will coexist and play their educational support functions in the long term in different eras.

4.2 Proper imitation, encourage innovation

The exchange of teaching tools lies in complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses, ultimately optimizing teaching resources. Good teaching aids are worth learning from and borrowing for one's own classroom service, but the use of teaching aids should not be limited to imitation. Even traditional teaching aids such as word cards and charts can help different types of students when different teaching strategies and usage rules are applied.

Innovation in teaching aids can also be reflected in specific types. Several teachers mentioned in the survey that they have tried new teaching aids during their classes, such as clay, Werewolf cards, and Monopoly. These may seem unrelated to the Chinese classroom, but with clever application, they can also become useful teaching aids, serving the classroom and students in vocabulary and discourse output. In recent years, the increasing presence of tabletop games in classrooms can effectively demonstrate the concept of innovative teaching and learning through fun. It can be seen that the development of future teaching aids cannot do without appropriate imitation and innovation.

4.3 Establish an international platform and market mechanism for the exchange of Chinese teaching aids

Statistics show that the vast majority of Chinese language teachers have experience in making their own teaching aids, which to some extent indicates a deficiency in the current international Chinese teaching aids market in meeting teachers' needs. It is precisely because of these shortcomings that in some regions and communities, there has been a growing trend of teacher support platforms centered around teaching aids, such as the "Board Games for Learning Chinese" in Taiwan, in order to access teaching aid information in a timely manner, making it easier for self-

production and purchase. With the advent of the big data era, we can see more and more international Chinese communication platforms providing teaching convenience for teachers and students. In addition to platforms for courses, teaching materials, recruitment, etc., teaching aids platforms are equally important and should be valued. Furthermore, based on this, by comparing with the textbook market, gradually establish a sound international Chinese teaching aids market mechanism, which can not only benefit teachers, but also promote the optimization and upgrading of related industries in international Chinese education, increase economic vitality, and may be a good choice for the development of the discipline.

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