A STUDY ON THE AUDIO-LINGUISTIC METHOD FOR TEACHING MANDARIN AS SECOND LANGUAGE AT AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN KOTA KINABALU

PERPUSTAKAAN UNIVERRITI MALAYSIA SABAH

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FAKULTI PSIKOLOGI DAN PENDIDIKAN UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA SABAH 2019



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ABSTRACT

Mandarin is the second language but is a compulsory course in international school in Kota Kinabalu. Students always complain that mandarin is too difficult to master because they have been facing some problems during their Mandarin study. Audio-lingual method has been used to improve students' listening and speaking skills ever since it was proposed by linguists and made popular in the 1960s. The objective of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of audio-lingual method for teaching mandarin as second language at Kota Kinabalu international school, to find out the students' satisfaction on the use of audio-lingual method and to identify the advantages and challenges faced by students regarding the audio-lingual method. This study was conducted in Kota Kinabalu international school, Sabah, Malaysia. It involved 18 primary year 4 students separated into two groups which are experimental group and control group. Audio-lingual method was used in the experimental group while the traditional method was applied in control group. This study lasted for 3 months. The instruments used in this study was pre-test and post-test data collection for the purpose of finding out the effectiveness of audiolingual method in Mandarin as second language in improving students' listening and speaking skills, Likert-scale questionnaire was used to identify the satisfaction level of students on the use of audio-lingual method and checklist conducted to gauge the advantages faced by students regarding the audio-lingual method. After collecting the data, SPSS program was used to analyze students' scores and satisfaction. Checklist was used as a means to validate findings of the experiment. The finding of this study revealed that students' listening and speaking skills improved significantly in the experimental group more than the control group, the significance value alpha is 0.042. This shows that audiolingual method is more effective than traditional method for teaching mandarin as second language in Kota Kinabalu international school. The questionnaire result showed that students' satisfaction towards teacher and the teaching content were at high level with the overall mean score of 3.9267 and 4.1467. On the other hand, students' satisfaction towards learning activities was at moderate level with the overall mean score of 3,8226. The checklist result showed that there were definite advantages and challenges of audiolingual method in improving listening and speaking skills. This study revealed that audiolingual method is effective in improving students' listening and speaking skills because of the inherent advantages of audio-lingual method but there were also some challenges faced by students and teachers. To achieve the maximum effectiveness, it was proposed that teacher needs to take into consideration students' learning interest, needs and feedback in designing learning activities in audio-lingual method class.

Keywords: Audio-Linguistic, Mandarin, Kota Kinabalu International School



ABSTRAK

KAJIAN MENGENAI KAEDAH AUDIO-LINGUISTIK UNTUK PENGAJARAN BAHASA MANDARIN SEBAGAI SECOND LANGUAGE DI SEKOLAH ANTARABANGSA KOTA KINABALU

Bahasa Mandarin adalah bahasa kedua tetapi merupakan kursus wajib di sekolah antarabangsa Kota Kinabalu. Para pelajar sentiasa mengadu bahawa bahasa Mandarin terlalu sukar untuk dikuasai kerana mereka menghadapi masalah semasa belajar bahasa Mandarin. Kaedah audio-bahasa telah digunakan untuk meningkatkan kemahiran mendengar dan kemahiran kemahiran bertutur pelajar dan ia juga telah dicadangkan oleh ahli bahasa malah popular pada tahun 1960-an. Obiektif kajian ini adalah untuk menakaji keberkesanan kaedah audio-bahasa di dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Mandarin sebagai bahasa kedua di sekolah antarabangsa Kota Kinabalu, di samping mengetahui kepuasan pelajar terhadap penggunaan kaedah audio-bahasa serta mengenal pasti kelebihan dan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pelajar di dalam kaedah audio-bahasa in. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di sekolah antarabangsa Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. Ia melibatkan 18 pelajar tahun 4 yang dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan, iaitu kumpulan eksperimen dan kumpulan kawalan. Kaedah audio-bahasa digunakan dalam kumpulan eksperimen, manakala kaedah tradisional digunakan dalam kumpulan kawalan. Kajian ini berlangsung selama 3 bulan. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam kajian ini adalah pra-ujian dan pasca ujian, soal selidik skala Likert dan temubual. Selepas mengumpul data, program SPSS digunakan untuk menganalisis markah dan kepuasan pelajar. Analisis dokumen juga digunakan untuk menganalisis hasil temuduga. Keputusan daripada kajian dalam kumpulan eksperimen menunjukkan bahawa, kemahiran mendengar dan kemahiran berkomunikasi pelajar di dapati meningkat dengan ketara melebihi daripada keputusan daripada kumpulan kawalan. Ini membuktikan bahawa, kaedah audio-bahasa adalah lebih berkesan berbanding kaedah tradisional dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Mandarin sebagai bahasa kedua di sekolah antarabangsa Kota Kinabalu, Hasil soal selidik pula menunjukkan bahawa, kepuasan pelajar terhadap guru dan kandungan pembelajaran berada di tahap yang tinggi. Sebaliknya, kepuasan pelajar terhadap aktiviti pembelajaran berada pada tahap sederhana. Hasil temuduga menunjukkan terdapat beberapa kelebihan dan cabaran kaedah audio-bahasa dalam meningkatkan kemahiran mendengar dan komunikasi. Kajian ini membuktikan bahawa kaedah audio-bahasa lebih berkesan dalam meningkatkan kemahiran mendengar dan kemahiran berkomunikasi pelajar kerana terdapat beberapa kelebihan dalam kaedah audio-lingual ini. Walau bagaimanapun, masih terdapat beberapa cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pelajar dan guru. Untuk mencapai keberkesanan maksimum, adalah dicadangkan agar guru perlu mengambil kira minat pelajar di dalam proses pembelajaran, keperluan, dan maklum balas dalam mereka bentuk aktiviti pembelajaran kelas kaedah audio-bahasa ini

Kata kunci : Audio-Linguistik, Mandarin, Sekolah Antarabangsa Kota Kinabalu



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Over the last 30 years, interest in learning Mandarin is growing exponentially. Mandarin Chinese is becoming the first choice of second language with over 30 million people around the world are learning Mandarin and 2,500 universities in more than 100 counties are offering Mandarin courses. It is a significant growth of non-Chinese heritage people learning Mandarin Chinese. Chinese teaching services are increasing rapidly. Apart from the government-funded institutions like the Confucius Institutes, the number of primary and secondary schools plus private colleges and mandarin teaching institutions offering Chinese language courses are also increasing. In Southeast Asia more than 2 million people are actively learning Chinese language. In Malaysia alone, there are already more than 1,280 primary Chinese schools, 60 secondary Chinese schools and 3 Chinese colleges with the main teaching medium in Mandarin. Most of international schools in Malaysia in recent years started to offer Mandarin classes to meet students' needs. There is also an increasing trend amongst the non-Chinese ethnic group in Malaysia learning mandarin.

Increasing demand for Mandarin learning results in greater need of more effective mandarin teaching or learning methods. How to meet the increasing Mandarin learning demand with improved Mandarin learning achievement posts a big challenge for Mandarin Chinese teachers. The research on how to use the many available second language teaching methods effectively has become popular.

Kota Kinabalu International School (KIS) is a 43-year-old international school with nearly 500 students from more than 30 countries. Since September 2016, Mandarin has been made a compulsory course and second language. Students have been facing some problems about Mandarin learning and complain learning Mandarin is too difficult. These problems are: students learning Mandarin as a second language



suffer from Mute Mandarin phenomenon; Students have difficulty acquiring proper pronunciation; Students have difficulty in cultivating Mandarin language habit; Students have poor listening skills; Students are not capable of speaking Mandarin fluently; There is a lack of confidence to speak Mandarin and students feel that Chinese Characters are difficult to learn. The researcher believes that all of these problems may be resolved by using Audio-lingual method. The researcher is from mainland China and the first Chinese Language Teacher to make such a study in this school on the effectiveness of applying the Audio-lingual method of teaching Mandarin as a second language, the associated problems encountered, the ways to overcome them and the advantages and challenges of audio-lingual method.

1.2 Problems statement

Mandarin is a complex language to learn, it is fundamentally different from English and the Roman Script. It is not easy to master because Mandarin has its own alphabet unlike other languages that use the Roman alphabet. The intonation, Chinese characters and strokes are all new to non-Chinese speakers. In international schools, due to different students' language background, discrepancy of their Mandarin language levels and limited teaching hours, students found it challenging to learn Mandarin, there are some problems and challenges faced during Mandarin learning like. The main problems and challenges faced by international school students are stated as follow:

1.2.1 Students who learn Mandarin as a second language suffers from "Mute Mandarin" phenomenon

Mute Mandarin as well as mute English is a common phenomenon among students learning the language as a second language. According to Ellis (1997), some second language learners undergo a silent period in which they make no attempt to say anything, especially for young children. Some Mandarin learners have already mastered lots of Mandarin words and grammar, acquired high level of reading and understanding but they cannot speak well similar to the mute English learners in China. Lao (2008) has concluded the reasons for Dumb English in China, pointing out that translation and grammar not only cannot help to improve communication skills but also hinder English thinking. For long time, Grammar-Translation Method was



very commonly used in both English and Mandarin as second language teaching which has resulted in mute Chinese and mute English phenomenon. Mute foreign language phenomenon is quite common and there are lots of reasons for it. It might be because some school's examination system does not demand assessment and evaluation in listening and speaking, as a result, students are good at reading and writing but not good at listening and speaking. Another reason is some foreign language teachers are not very proficient in listening and speaking skills.

Naheed Haq (2014) in his study "An Analysis of the Effects of Audio - Lingual Method of Teaching on the Listening & Speaking Skills of Students" has pointed that written work is preferred by the teachers for the reason of shedding teacher's burden. Moreover, students reproduce memorized material in examination which result in students good at reading and writing but poor at listening and speaking. Another reason is foreign language teachers are not very proficient in the listening and speaking skills. The most important reason is the traditional grammar-translation method which lacks speaking and listening practice resulting in Mute Mandarin phenomenon. Ellis (1997) thinks second language learners do not want to speak the target language because they may have learned the language only by listening or reading. Larson-Freeman and Anderson (2011) have already pointed out Grammar-Translation Method was not very effective in preparing students to use target language communicatively. Extensive speaking and listening training in audio-lingual method is a good way to avoid dumb Chinese (Mandarin) or deaf Chinese (Mandarin) phenomenon. The more learners speak, the quicker they improve. In audio lingual method, speaking and listening are emphasized which enables students to speak and communicate in Mandarin, make students "speak" rather than "read". Richards (2005.p8.) states that dialogues and drills are the basis of classroom practice in audio-lingual method. Sentence pattern practice is repetition and memory work which is used most of the time for repeated imitation, memory, repetition. Audiolingual method can avoid mute Chinese (Mandarin) phenomenon.

1.2.2 Students have difficulty acquiring proper pronunciation

Learning to pronounce a foreign language like a native speaker does is really difficult. Pronunciation is one of the most important aspects of learning language. Without a



clear pronunciation, one cannot express clearly. It is undeniable that the better your pronunciation is, the better people will understand you and the easier for you to understand them. In traditional Mandarin teaching method, acquiring proper pronunciation is a common difficulty for language learners due to lack of real scenario and opportunity for language input and output. Difficulty in pronunciation weakens students' communicative competence (Hinofotis, 1981). Mandarin is a tonal language, the same syllable can be pronounced with different tones which conveys different meaning. Each tone has a distinctive pitch contour which can be graphed using the Chinese five-level system. Confusing Mandarin tones is the most common problem encountered for Mandarin learners. Grigg (2011) has summarized that tones are by far and always the common kind of mistakes. For some mandarin learners, it is easy to make mistakes due to use of tones wrongly.

One of the main ways to have pronunciation practice in the classroom is through drilling, which is a basic and fundamental language teaching skill (Kelly, 2000). In audio-lingual method, students' pronunciation can be improved very fast. The distinctive feature of the audio-lingual method is the use of drills and pattern practice (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Many and various kinds of drills are used in second language classroom, such as: repetition, inflection, replacement, restatement, completion, transposition, expansion, contraction, transformation, integration, rejoinder and restoration (Brooks, 1961). Freeman and Anderson (2011) say teacher is like an orchestra conductor, directing and controlling the language behavior of students. Teacher also acts as a good model for imitation to students. Students follow teacher's directions and respond as accurately and rapidly as possible. Plenty of speaking and listening practices can improve students' pronunciation and at the same time, teacher pays more attention on students' pronunciation. Freeman and Anderson (2011) also mention contrastive analysis has led teacher to use minimal pair words to get students to note the difference in pronunciation between the words in each pair, students' errors are to be avoided as far as possible.

1.2.3 Students have difficulty to cultivate target language habit

Some Mandarin learners have learned this language for a long time, but it is still



difficult for them to form target language habit. Most students tend to use their native language in learning second language in terms of medium of instruction and translation. In traditional Mandarin teaching method, the students cannot cultivate the target language habits due to lack of practice. As a result, students are not used to speak the target language even though they have learned the target language for a long time. Foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation (Richards & Rodgers 2007). The native language habits prevent the learners' second language formation (Ellis, 1997).

To cultivate students' target language habits is to make students get used to speak target language. In audio-lingual method, intensive oral drilling is a good way to cultivate target language habits. The more often something is repeated, the stronger the habit formation and the greater the learning. In audio-lingual method, the use of drills and pattern practice is a distinctive feature, various kinds of drills are used (Richard & Rodgers 2001). Teacher prepares a series of drills designed for students to practice with structural patterns and new vocabulary. Structural patterns are presented through dialogues which are learned through imitation and repetition. Students' successful responses are positively reinforced which can help students to develop correct habits. In Freeman's (2011) opinion, students should learn repeatedly sentence pattern until they can answer automatically without stopping to think (2011). Students can achieve this by forming new habits in the target language and overcoming the old habits of their native language. Language speaking is a habit. Once students formed target language habits, they start to get used to speak target language.

1.2.4 Students have poor listening skills

Some Chinese language learners cannot communicate with others due to poor listening skills. Without listening skill, no communication can be achieved (Croom Helm Cross, D., 1998). Ability in listening is perhaps the most important skill in any language learning. Poor listening skills will result in poor communicative skills. Some Chinese language learners are struggling with their listening skills because they are not familiar with the speech patterns, pronunciation, different tones, rhythm, intonation and stress of the language.



Listening forms the concrete basis for complete language proficiency. In audio-lingual method, it advocates aural training first, then pronunciation training, followed by speaking, reading, and writing. A taped lesson may first present a dialogue for listening practice; Richards and Rodgers (2001) think tape recorders and audiovisual equipment often have central roles in an audiolingual course because it can help improving students' listening skills. Even though the teacher is not a native speaker of the target language, the tape recorder provides accurate models for dialogues and drills. Teachers often use minimal pair words to get students to note the difference in pronunciation between the words in pair which is a good way to improve students listening skills.

1.2.5 Students are not capable of speaking fluently

Inability to speak fluently is another problem for Chinese language learners. Lennon (1990) has defined fluency as the psycholinguistic process of speech planning and production are functioning easily and efficiently. Richard (2002) defined the fluency is natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communicative competence. Speaking mandarin fluently is a big challenge for Chinese language learners. Richards (2002) "Traditional approaches to language teaching gave priority to grammatical competence as the basis of language proficiency". In traditional Chinese language teaching method, teachers focus more on grammar and less on speaking and listening skills, which result in students having higher comprehension but lower speaking and listening skills. Many students know the grammatical rules very well but they lack the confidence or not knowing what to say when they have conversation with others, like what Richards (2002) says the ability to speak a second language well is not an easy task. Leaning to speak a second language involves more than knowing grammatical and semantic rules (Renandya & Richards 2002). The major and most difficult task for second language teachers is how to get students to talk.

One of the goals of language teaching is to develop fluency in language use (Richards, 2002). Communicative language teaching methodologies are based on the audio-lingual method and the Structural-Situational approach. The techniques of audio-lingual method used include various forms of guided speaking practice like



memorization of dialogue, question and answer practice, substitution drills. One of the most important methods of gaining proficiency of any language is speaking it regularly. Chandy (2013) says that practicing is the key to language learning. The more you use a word or a sentence, the better you become in absorbing the meaning and the effect of the word and the sentence. Listen more and speak more to build fluency. Audio-lingual method is very popular in teaching Chinese (Mandarin) as a second language because it changes the phenomenon of dumb Chinese (Mandarin). It aims to train students' language communication skills and improve students speaking and listening skills faster. Students can speak Chinese fluently by using this teaching method (Liu, 2008). In audio-lingual method, teacher prepares a series of drills like backward build-up, repetition, chain, single-slot substitution, multiple-slot substitution, transformation and question and answer to give students more practices. Practice makes perfect. The only key is to keep practicing, if once does not work, then do it twice, trice.....you will finally get it (Cao, 2017). Schmidt (1992) has pointed out that fluency is automatic procedural skill. These extensive sentence pattern practices enable students to speak target language fluently.

1.2.6 Lack of confidence in students

Lack of confidence in the students is a universal problem for second language learners. This is also a common problem for Chinese language learners. Because of the feeling of shyness or insecurity, language learners will not speak the language. Merritt (2012) says some EFL teachers complain that students are too afraid of making mistake in mispronunciation or grammatical error that would cause them embarrassment. In traditional Mandarin teaching method, the teachers focus on grammar translation instead of focusing on listening and speaking.

Lack of practice and fear of making mistakes or errors are the main reasons for the lack of confidence in a student. In audio-lingual method, collective drilling and individual drilling are the main way in which pronunciation is practiced in the classroom. Collective drilling is a good way to help build confidence. In this method, teachers generally drill chorally first, they provide a model of the word, phrase or structure for students to copy, then invite the whole class to repeat the item in unison. According to Kelly (2000), this kind of choral drilling can help to build learners' confidence and give learners the chance to practice pronouncing the drilled item.



Apart from choral drilling, individual drill is also used very often. For instance, chain drill, students are invited one-by-one to repeat or ask and answer questions. According to Freeman (2011), this drill gives the teacher an opportunity to check students' speech and identify students' errors and mistakes. Making errors and mistakes are inevitable and is an important process in second language acquisition. Ellis (1977) argues that errors can raise important question of why do learners make errors. It can help teacher to identify errors to know students' gaps in a learners' knowledge. It also helps students to learn when they self-correct the errors they make. Individual drilling also gives student more chances to pronounce the item being drilled. Practice makes perfect, once students have practiced enough, they can speak target language confidently.

1.2.7 Chinese Characters are difficult to learn

The most difficult problem or obstacle for Chinese language learners is the Chinese characters. Chinese characters are difficult to use, read or write. If you already know the language, the script is manageable. For foreigner trying to learn the characters and the language at the same time, it will be harder. Simon and Lu (1942) say if you are trying to learn Chinese characters at the same time as learning the language, it imposes a virtually impossible burden because the learners cannot cope with sound, sense and insight, all being new, simultaneously. In traditional Mandarin teaching method, teachers teach the language and Chinese characters at the same time. The students feel it is too hard to learn resulting in slower progress.

Chinese character is a major obstacle for foreigner, but according to Halliday (2007) the only way to solve this problem is to become fluent in the language before starting to learn the character. If the students are trying to learn both the language and the very complex writing system at the same time, both may be unattainable. Richards and Rodgers (2001) believe "that language skills are learned more effectively if the items to be learned in the target language are presented in spoken form before they are shown in written form." In audio-lingual method, the language skills are taught in the order of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The oral/aural skills are greatly emphasized (Larsen-Freeman, 2011). Once the learners are familiar with target language, they start to learn the Chinese character. In this



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