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# Innovation Drama Teaching of “New Pinocchio” in Chinese Language Learning: Action Research

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## ABSTRACT

The prevalence of learning Chinese in the United States is very popular with the learning Chinese language throughout the world. This atmosphere is very encouraging for children in Chinese schools and improves their learning motivation. This research is action research and the purpose of this study is (1) to explore the current situation of teaching Chinese in the United States and to answer the research questions based on the reaction and self-reflection of young children, (2) to revise teaching materials and teaching methods during the research, (3) to utilize the innovation story theater model into the Chinese curriculum of the bilingual school in USA, and (4) to find out the suggestions and feasible solutions to the various problems. The research found that if learning activities are intrinsically attractive there is no need to arrange any games to motivate children's learning. Moreover, the findings show that the innovative story theater is very practical and can effectively enhance children's interest in learning Chinese.

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## 1. Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century has seen an explosion of interest in learning Modern Standard Chinese at both college levels and secondary-school levels of education in the U.S.A. It is inclusive survey study showed by the Modern Language Association (MLA) demonstrating that Chinese language enrolments in U.S. organizations of higher education improved dramatically by 51% from 2002 to 2006 (Furman et al., 2007). According to the 2008 U.S. Census Report, the population of Chinese Americans has touched 3.62 million, becoming the largest Asian group in the U.S. In reply to growing cultural diversity in America's schools, the College Board also thrown an Advance Placement program course and investigation in Chinese Language and Culture in December 2003 so as to promote cultural considerate, foster friendship, and increase bilateral relations (College, 2009).

Chinese is one of the more challenging languages for English speakers to learn due to huge part to the nature of its written orthography. Exactly, its standard orthographic form does not willingly specify how Chinese characters are to be pronounced (Ru-hui & Zhi-lang, 2016). According to Ding-yong (2010) research survey, regularly students choose to study Chinese language after class or weekends because Chinese courses do not count for credits. Compared with Chinese school and states school, the education system from Chinese school is lacking. Wan-ru (2010) mentioned that she visited the United States in 2008. In the teaching area of the STARTALK Program, she was able to feel the discomfort of Chinese language teaching materials, which made it impossible for students to learn effectively. In addition, Chinese language teaching materials have not been

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fully utilized, which has made it difficult for students to learn, and the teachers and teaching materials have not been systematically arranged at various stages (Wan-ru, 2010; De-ming, 2002).

Storytelling is the most important strategy, and important storytelling techniques include the use of voice (words and sound effects), facial expression and bodily gesture, mime, pace, repetition, rhythm, elaboration, exaggeration and most of all engagement with the audience (Zi-kai, 2009; Shu-hui, 2004). In addition to, drama teaching is the act of using the imagination to become someone or something other than yourself. It can take one any place to any period of time. It is only limited by the imagination, the participants' fear of risking, or the leader or teacher's set limitations (Chun-li, 2009; Su-qi, 2011). Finally, storytelling is one of the simplest and perhaps most compelling forms of dramatic and imaginative activity (Dong-hui, 2014).

For the above reasons, the purpose of this study was to explore the current situation of Chinese language teaching for Asian American in the United States, and to integrate the learning method of the Chinese language with the storytelling performance of "New Pinocchio", and to bring the innovative story theater into the Chinese course Buddha's Light Private School in Dallas, Texas. The research team utilized action research to find out the suggestions and feasible solutions to the various problems in the process; and it is hoped to further develop the suitable Chinese language teaching method for the Buddha's Light Private School in Texas, USA.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Data Collection

Based on the formative assessment of the research, we changed the activities of Chinese language teaching and the teaching materials. The sources of evaluation included interviews with Chinese language teachers, interviews with children, classroom observations, and children's homework (Qing-tian, 2004). The interviews include formal and non-formal parties, and some non-formal talks taking place during the break of the course. In the fifth week, we made a formal group meeting and completed an action plan performance. The research team found that group meeting was more effective than individuals, and the information was more abundant than individual talking. It helps the research team understand the behavior of the participants and clarify the reasons and context (Zhao-min, 2010; 2013). The interview is a process of exploration for teachers and students to help children perceive their own learning. The researchers conducted a total of six weeks of observations every day, taking notes and recording and filming.

### 2.2 Research Questions

Based on theories, literature findings, and Chinese language teaching in the United States, we propose three research questions namely (1) whether it is appropriate to use Chinese language learning using the integrated innovation drama teaching and what kind of activities can be matched with, (2) what children react toward the innovation drama teaching, (3) what the advantages and limitations of Chinese language are by using the innovation drama teaching.

### 2.3 Research Participants

Participants in this action research are children who enrol in summer Chinese class at the Buddha's Light Private School in Texas, two Chinese language teachers and one English teacher and six research teams. A total of 25 children in the summer Chinese class at the Buddha's Light Private School in Texas, USA, aged between 5 and 12 years old, most of whom are Chinese-speaking children whose primary language is English, and the second language is Chinese. In addition, the Chinese teachers are native Chinese speaker and English as a second language. Moreover, the research team of six people are from Taiwan and all of researchers are familiar with early childhood education curriculum development and teacher training.

### 2.4 Action Research

Action research is employed to discover the result of the research. This research method is considered valid because it is a cyclical, continuous process focusing on the self-reflection of the researcher. Mei-ru (2003) defined the process as a systematic evaluation of certain educational decisions which help to reach a maximum

outcome of such practice. In addition, action research involves four basic procedures of **planning** (to develop a flexible plan of critical informed action based on the current situation), **acting** (to implement the plan), **observing** (to observe the effects of implementation), **reflecting** (to reflect on the effects observed as a basis for a revised plan)

### 2.5 Create Chinese language curriculum by using innovation drama teaching

Before starting this action research, the research team compared the theory and education of Chinese language teaching in Taiwan. The research team shared the curriculum and academic foundations of the development of Taiwanese children's education, the implementation of Chinese language teaching methods and the response of students and parents with Chinese language teachers at Buddha's Light Private School in Dallas, Texas. In addition, the research team talked about the differences in overseas Chinese language courses, and then we decided to turn dissatisfaction into action. The research team developed a suitable teaching method in the Buddha's Light Private School in Texas, USA such as using games to integrate Chinese teaching, scripting, and storytelling. Through the observation of children, interviews and teacher self-assessment, each course will review the design process of the research team. Moreover, the research purposes are threefold: 1. To create an opportunity for the research team to understand overseas Chinese teaching education and share this understanding with Taiwanese educators and then use research results to improve the team's own learning. 2. Integrate the experimental materials of the Chinese language curriculum through innovative drama teaching with the Chinese language teachers and students at the Buddha's Light Private School in Texas, USA. 3. Integrate listening, speaking, and reading abilities using innovative Drama teaching. The ADDIE model is the generic process traditionally used by instructional designers and training developers. The five phases—Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation—represent a dynamic, flexible guideline for building effective training and performance support tools (Yu-hua & Hong-zhen, 2006). However, the ADDIE model is used in the research design of the Buddha's Light Private School Chinese language curriculum in the United States:

<i>links</i>	<i>Contents</i>
(Analysis)	1. Identify research needs and analyze the goals of the Chinese language course 2. Define the teaching skills used and understand the learning motivation of young children 3. Consider Chinese teaching time and situational constraints
(Design)	1. Know the goals of the Chinese language course and decide on the teaching theme 2. Set unit teaching objectives and develop detailed teaching activities plans
(Development)	1. Prepare Chinese language teaching materials
(Implementation)	1. Use a suitable learning management system in Dallas, USA 2. Provide local student guidance and support and understand the factors that influence the course 3. Adjustment plan
(Evaluation)	1. Evaluation of Chinese language teaching materials and processes 2. Understand the reactions and effectiveness of young children 3. Exploring the teaching achievements of teachers

### 2.6 Curriculum Design and teaching contents

#### 2.6.1 Chinese Version

##### 三好歌 sān hǎo gē ( Music is integrated into Chinese teaching)

rén jiān zuì měi shì sān hǎo zuò hǎo shì shuō hǎo huà cún hǎo xīn  
人 間 最 美 是 三 好 做 好 事 說 好 話 存 好 心

píng ān jiù shì wǒ men de rén jiān bǎo rén jiān zuì měi hǎo shì sān hǎo  
平 安 就 是 我 們 的 人 間 寶 人 間 最 美 好 是 三 好

rén jiān zuì měi shì sān hǎo zuò hǎo shì shuō hǎo huà cún hǎo xīn  
人 間 最 美 是 三 好 做 好 事 說 好 話 存 好 心

píng ān jiù shì wǒ men de rén jiān bǎo rén jiān zuì měi hǎo shì sān hǎo  
平 安 就 是 我 們 的 人 間 寶 人 間 最 美 好 是 三 好

zuò hǎo shì jǔ shǒu zhī láo gōng dé miào shuō hǎo huà cí bēi ài yǔ rú dōng yáng  
做 好 事 舉 手 之 勞 功 德 妙 說 好 話 慈 悲 愛 語 如 冬 陽

cún hǎo xīn chéng yì shàn yuán hǎo yùn dào sān yè qīng jìng zhēn zhèng hǎo  
 存 好 心 誠 意 善 緣 好 運 到 三 業 清 靜 真 正 好  
 zuò hǎo shì jǔ shǒu zhī láo gōng dé miào shuō hǎo huà cí bēi ài yǔ rú dōng yáng  
 做 好 事 舉 手 之 勞 功 德 妙 說 好 話 慈 悲 愛 語 如 冬 陽  
 cún hǎo xīn chéng yì shàn yuán hǎo yùn dào sān yè qīng jìng zhēn zhèng hǎo  
 存 好 心 誠 意 善 緣 好 運 到 三 業 清 靜 真 正 好  
 shí xiàn sān hǎo zuì zhòng yào  
 實 現 三 好 最 重 要

### 2.6.2 English Version

The Three Acts of Goodness are the most beautiful acts in the world;

Mastering the Three Acts of Goodness is worthiest of being proud;

Do good deeds, speak good words, think good thoughts;

Nothing is comparable to these Three Acts of Goodness.

Look! Do good deeds:

Lending a helping hand yields wondrous merit; Service and dedication are like the full moonshining in the skies.

Listen! Speak good words:

Compassionate and loving words are like the winter sun; Encouragement and praise are like the fragrance of flowers following you from everywhere.

Think! Think good thoughts:

Sincerity and good causes yield good effects; The presence of a sage in one's mind is like a fertile field ready to yield a good harvest. So let us all come together and

Do good deeds, speak good words, and think good thoughts; How wonderful it is to be pure!

You do good deeds; I speak good words; They think good thoughts.

You are well; I am well; They are well; Everybody will be well.

Wellness is the treasure of our world; And The Three Acts of Goodness are the most beautiful acts we have; This is why the Three Acts of Goodness are the most important practices in the world.

### 2.6.3 New Pinocchio Outline (Innovative Drama Integrated into Chinese Teaching)

The children who participated in the study were adapted from the Pinocchio, from the discussion of the script, the character scene production to the new script, and through the occasional way to enhance the children's interest in learning Chinese language.

### 2.7 Research Process

The process of research was explored by the research team with Chinese teachers in Dallas, USA. We continually modify the teaching materials to answer research questions based on the child reaction and self-reflection. Before engaging in action research, the research team spent a week observing the Chinese language teacher's teaching and children's learning experience in Dallas, Texas. We found that the Chinese language teaching method of the school is very traditional and emphasis on reading and writing, but there is a small amount of time to use songs to cause children to learn Chinese. The action research process was designed for six weeks (theme: Sanhao) activities, using self-design materials to bring an innovation drama theaters, songs, and art works to enhance children's knowledge of Chinese language and let them know that they do not have to rely on teachers to learn. Using an innovation drama theater method, children can learn new words, and sentences from the drama arrangement and song creation.



Fig. 1. Drama practice



Fig. 2. Character discussion

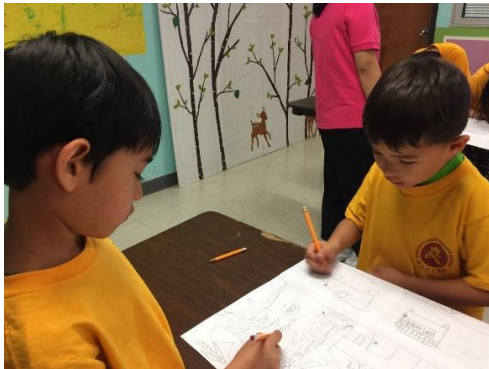


Fig. 3. Script discussion



Fig. 4. Scene discussion

### 3. Results and Discussion

When the research team designed the teaching method and curriculum, the reaction of the children was quite different from our expectations. The study found that effective Chinese teaching method in the United States are not necessarily effective in Chinese teaching in Taiwan because we neglect that the children's background may not be from a Chinese-speaking family, so the child's reaction is not the same as that of Taiwanese children because of language barriers. Therefore, the results of the innovative drama teaching performance are not too long, and the content of the story should be streamlined and adjusted to the content that young children can understand. In addition, for older children, the content of the story is not too complicated, and they need more time to think about the whole story. Finally, the research team hopes that children in Buddha's Light Private School can using the innovation drama to make children interest with learning Chinese. Therefore, it is constantly being revised in the design of the summer Chinese language course of the Buddha's Light Private School in Texas, USA.

In the preparation of the innovation drama theater, the Chinese language level of the child is considered. The original complicated story content is not suitable for American Chinese children, so we have adapted a little content that children can understand of the story of Pinocchio through a simple vocabulary. Around the three good themes, the research team adapted Pinocchio to let the children know and understand the significance between "good things", "good words" and "good heart". The teachers of the Buddha's Light Private School in Texas, who participated in the study, have never seen the children's attention to listening to a Chinese-language story drama. In the past, children hated learning Chinese, and children felt the pressure to learn Chinese. Therefore, every class must think about songs to enhance their interest in learning. In this class, there is no constant recognition of words and words, and there is no game, but children are eager to discuss and set their roles and can easily speak Chinese.

Finally, after changes and revisions, we found that the design of Chinese language teaching activities was quite successful. The six-week action research and innovation drama integrated into the Chinese teaching method, help children understand the Chinese cultural background. Research utilize teaching principles based on writing and germination, stories, dramas and games, it let children learn about the fun of learning Chinese.



The research team also assisted the Chinese language teachers of the Buddha's Light Private School in the United States to help them realize the strategy of integrating the innovation drama theater into the teaching. It can also be used in the future teaching of Chinese language skills.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study explores ways to innovate Chinese language teaching in the Buddha's Light Private School in a collaborative manner. At present, most of the general Chinese language teachers in the United States still use traditional methods and do not reflect the results and recommendations of research such as literacy research and second language learning.

Action research is an empowerment process. McNiff (2002) indicated that Action research is the process by which teachers choose the most effective learning strategies in their own classes. This model of research provides greater flexibility for Chinese language teachers in the Buddha's Light Private School in the United States, and the knowledge of more innovative dramas and the satisfaction of more Chinese professors.

Storytelling theatre is practiced in Chinese Language Learning as a Second Language at Buddha's Light Private School. Both researchers and learners reported using storytelling theatre method in the classroom, and the researchers' concluded storytelling is used as it could be and its full potential has been realized. Participants in the study found storytelling an effective strategy for language learning and a good teaching tool. The results of the study show that if the learning activity itself is attractive, there is no need to arrange any games to motivate the learning. Through the effective innovative story theatre activities, adapt traditional stories, add simple words, simplify the story and extend the words suitable for children to learn. Researcher team found storytelling was an effective mean and a good teaching tool. However, using storytelling in the classroom still is done separately in simple ways without specific strategy and the aids of psychological orientations.

Finally, as a matter of fact, early childhood education did not focus on teaching reading and writing. In teaching Chinese language, listening and speaking become the needs. Therefore, the most appropriate method for the children is listening how the words/sentences are pronounced and repeated. Before that, the students need to learn some simple sentences to use in daily activities with Chinese language.

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