

The Application of TPRS Teaching Method for Chinese as Second Language Students

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Abstract

This study employs the TPRS teaching method to research elementary-level spoken Chinese instruction for foreign learners. It emphasizes moving beyond textbook content and focusing on cultivating students' oral output abilities. The purpose includes of this study were: 1) to applying TPRS in an experimental class for elementary-level spoken Chinese, comparing it with a control class, analyzing whether significant differences exist in oral test scores, assessing TPRS's suitability for basic oral teaching. 2) to assess satisfaction from using TPRS teaching method for Chinese as a second language students . The sample for this study included 44 undergraduate foreign students (aged 18-22) from Sichuan University of Science and Engineering. Students were selected using a simple random sampling technique. Each consisting of 44 students with no significant oral proficiency differences. Post-teaching, oral scores of both groups are compared. The findings showed that 1) Improved oral scores for both classes post-teaching, with significant differences favoring the experimental group, demonstrating TPRS's efficacy in enhancing oral proficiency. 2) The student's level of satisfaction toward the TPRS teaching method was at the highest level. TPRS aids vocabulary acquisition and real-world knowledge application.

Keywords: TPRS Teaching Method, Chinese as a Foreign Language, Basic Oral Instruction

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1. Introduction

Oral teaching plays a crucial role in Chinese language learning. Several language education scholars emphasize the importance of oral training for students. Shih Pei-Wen(1983) believes that oral teaching aims to cultivate students' ability to express themselves in Chinese thinking, while Yang Huiyuan (1991)points out that oral skills are key to the vocal expression of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar. Wang Ruojiang(1999) emphasizes the crucial role of oral skills in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, and Hou Yaguang(2005) highlights that international students need to engage in communication through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Shen Xiuyan(1996) believes that students need to master the differences between oral expression and written language, and Guo Yingwen(2003) suggests that elementary oral teaching should incorporate everyday communication language. In summary, oral teaching is not only about imparting language knowledge but also an essential way to assess students' proficiency.

TPRS, formerly known as Total Physical Response Storytelling, and later as Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling since 2004, emphasizes reading and storytelling as the most important ways of language learning.

2. Research Objectives

2.1 To apply the TPRS method in an experimental class for elementary-level spoken Chinese and compare it with a control class, analyze whether significant differences exist in oral test scores, and assess the suitability of TPRS for basic oral teaching.

2.2 To assess the satisfaction of Chinese as a second language students with the use of the TPRS teaching method.

3. Research Hypotheses

3.1. Using the TPRS teaching method in elementary-level Chinese oral teaching results in significant differences in student performance.

3.2. Elementary-level students are satisfied with the effectiveness of the TPRS teaching method for Chinese as a second language.

4. Research Methods

4.1 Population: The sample for this study includes 44 undergraduate international students from Sichuan University of Science and Technology (aged 18-22). Students were selected through simple random sampling, with each class consisting of 22 students, ensuring no significant differences in oral proficiency. Oral test scores were compared between the two groups after the teaching intervention.

4.2 Research Tools Include:

4.2.1. Teaching Methods to Improve The Oral Chinese Proficiency of Undergraduate International Students at Sichuan University of Science And Technology.

4.2.2. Enhancing Chinese Oral Expression Skills Through The TPRS Teaching Method.

4.2.3. *Expert Opinion Questionnaire on the TPRS Teaching Method.*

4.2.4. *Assessment Test of Oral Proficiency in Chinese as a Second Language Using The TPRS Teaching Method.*

4.2.5. *Satisfaction Survey Questionnaire on Improving Oral Proficiency in Chinese as a Second Language Using the TPRS Teaching Method.*

5. Conclusion

5.1 Results and Discussion of Oral Scores Data

5.1.1 *Pre-test Scores in the Experimental and Control Groups*

In this study, a pre-test and post-test were administered to both the experimental and control groups, and the data were analyzed using SPSS. As shown in Table 5-1, the experimental group had 22 students, and the control group had 22 students, with a similar number of participants in both groups. The mean score for the pre-test in the experimental group was 59.55 (standard deviation: 12.141), while in the control group, it was 58.91 (standard deviation: 12.428). From the pre-test scores, there was little difference in the oral test scores between the two groups before the experiment, indicating that the two groups had similar oral proficiency levels before the teaching experiment. The independent samples t-test results in Table 5-2 show $P = 0.864$ ($P > 0.05$), indicating no significant difference in pre-test scores between the experimental and control groups. This suggests that both groups had similar oral proficiency levels before the teaching experiment and both needed instruction and practice in oral skills.

Table 5-1: Paired Samples T-Test Analysis Results of Pre- and Post-Test Oral Proficiency Scores for Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	Mean	Number of Participants	Standard Deviation
Experimental Pretest	59.55	22	12.141
Experimental Posttest	72.95	22	3.671
Control Pretest	58.91	23	12.428
Control Posttest	66.30	23	5.049

5.1.2 *Pre-Post Test Scores in the Experimental and Control Groups*

As shown in the table, both the experimental and control groups showed improvement in oral scores after the intervention, with significant differences between the post-test and pre-test scores in the experimental group ($P = 0.00$, $P < 0.05$) and the control group ($P = 0.007$, $P < 0.05$). This indicates that both groups demonstrated significant improvement in oral scores with the joint efforts of teachers and students. At the elementary stage, students have limited prior knowledge in oral skills, which results in a ceiling effect in oral production. Through learning, students acquired more oral knowledge and practiced oral skills during the oral classes, leading to significant improvements in both groups.

Table 5-2: Independent Samples T-Test Analysis Results of Pre-Test Scores between Experimental and Control Groups

Variable	t-value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Significance (Sig.)	Experimental Group		Control Group	
				Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pretest Scores	.173	43	.864	59.55	12.141	5&91	12.428

Note: $p < 0.05$

However, from Table 5-1, it can be observed that in the post-test scores, the mean score in the experimental group was 72.95 (standard deviation: 3.671), while in the control group, it was 66.30 (standard deviation: 5.049). The experimental group showed an improvement of 13.4 points, while the control group showed an improvement of 7.39 points, indicating a greater improvement in the experimental group. The use of the TPRS teaching method in the experimental group enhanced the students' understanding and retention of the content of the oral classes.

To answer research question one, whether there are significant differences in post-test scores between the two groups, the independent samples t-test results in Table 5-4 show $P = 0.00$ ($P < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups, with the experimental group scoring higher. The application of the TPRS teaching method significantly improved the oral scores in Chinese as a second language at the elementary level.

In summary, the data analysis results of the experimental and control groups suggest that after one semester of teaching, there is a significant difference in oral scores between the two groups, with the experimental group achieving significantly higher scores. The use of the TPRS teaching method for teaching elementary-level oral Chinese has been successful in significantly improving students' oral scores.

5.2 Differences between the Experimental and Control Groups

The differences between the experimental and control groups can be attributed to the following factors:

Difference in teaching methods: The experimental group used the TPRS teaching method, which emphasizes student engagement, interaction, and comprehensible input, aiding students in better understanding and applying oral knowledge. The control group may have used traditional oral teaching methods, with the difference lying in the choice of teaching methods.

Teaching interaction: The TPRS teaching method enhances students' intrinsic interaction with learning content, interaction between students and teachers, and interaction among students. This interaction helps students better grasp oral knowledge and improve their oral expression skills.

Individual differences in the learning process: Individual differences among students may also lead to differences in oral scores. Some students may be more actively involved in classroom activities, while others may need more time to master oral skills.

In conclusion, the differences between the experimental and control groups are primarily due to the advantages of teaching methods and increased teaching interaction. These factors work together to significantly improve the oral scores in the experimental group. Therefore, the results of this study support the effectiveness of using the TPRS teaching method to enhance elementary-level oral Chinese teaching for Chinese as second language students.

5.3 Significant Differences in Language Learning Satisfaction Between the Two Groups

Student recognition of the positive effects of the TPRS teaching method: Students in the experimental group believe that the TPRS teaching method helps them learn oral skills and greatly assists with vocabulary, while students in the control group may not have had such a positive response.

Advantage in vocabulary acquisition: Students in the experimental group believe that the TPRS teaching method helps them accumulate vocabulary, which aligns with the requirements of elementary-level students who need a substantial foundation in vocabulary learning. Students in the control group may not share the same positive perception.

Individual personalities and emotional handling: Students in the experimental group expressed that they have different emotional responses when answering questions in the TPRS teaching method. Some may feel nervous and require more support and encouragement, while others may feel more confident. This indicates that the TPRS teaching method pays more attention to students' individualities and emotional handling, enhancing engagement in learning.

Storytelling: Students in the experimental group find storytelling to be interesting and helpful in learning oral skills, and the stories do not necessarily have to be lengthy. This demonstrates that storytelling with students as protagonists in the TPRS teaching method increases students' attention to the course content without overwhelming them.

Reading aloud practice: Students in the experimental group believe that reading aloud stories is helpful for learning oral skills and helps them remember the content better. This indicates that reading aloud activities in the TPRS teaching method have a positive impact on oral learning and boost students' confidence in oral skills.

In summary, based on interview results, students in the experimental group generally hold a positive attitude toward the TPRS teaching method, believing it is beneficial for learning oral skills. This may lead to higher language learning satisfaction in the experimental group compared to the control group. However, specific differences need further data analysis and statistical validation to confirm.

5.4 Summary

Through the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores, this study found that the experimental class achieved a significant improvement in oral scores after using the TPRS teaching method, and when compared to the control class, the experimental class scored

higher. This indicates that the TPRS teaching method has a significant educational impact on elementary-level oral teaching. Questionnaires and interviews revealed that students have a positive attitude toward the TPRS teaching method, expressing the following main points and opinions:

Positive attitude and expectations: 72.7% of students in the experimental group reported liking the use of the TPRS teaching method in elementary oral classes, and 81.8% of students expressed the desire to continue using this teaching method in the future. This indicates that students are highly positive about the TPRS teaching method and anticipate benefiting from it in their future learning.

Positive impact of reading aloud: Students recognize the reading aloud component in the TPRS teaching method and believe that reading stories improves the fluency of oral expression and enhances their memory of the content. This suggests that reading aloud is an effective teaching method that helps improve students' oral skills and learning motivation.

Advantages in vocabulary learning: Students generally believe that the TPRS teaching method is more helpful in phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar, aiding in vocabulary acquisition. The creation of authentic story scenarios by teachers is seen as helpful in clarifying learning objectives, and teacher feedback aids in better understanding vocabulary meanings.

In summary, based on data and student feedback, the TPRS teaching method has been successful in elementary oral teaching, improving student performance, stimulating learning interest, enhancing vocabulary learning, and improving oral expression skills. Students generally perceive this teaching method as having a positive impact on their learning experience, making the continued use of the TPRS teaching method in elementary oral classes reasonable and beneficial for students in improving their oral skills.

5.5 Discussion

Implementing the TPRS teaching method for elementary oral teaching requires teachers to pay attention to the following key points:

Control classroom pace and diversify questioning methods: Teachers should be able to flexibly manage the classroom process, encourage active student participation through various questioning methods, intonation, facial expressions, and gestures, and avoid mechanical responses to questions. Students should understand that answering questions is about supplementing story details rather than simple sentence substitution.

Summarize grammar structures: Depending on students' age and needs, teachers should summarize grammar structures after the story. Adult learners may require more grammar explanations, while child learners may benefit from practical grammar understanding.

Streamline story content: When creating stories, teachers should ensure clear chapter structures and avoid overly lengthy story texts. Providing both pinyin and non-pinyin versions of the story for student learning is important. Story texts should be clear and concise for easy understanding and memorization.

Guide the rhythm and intonation of reading aloud: Teachers should pay attention to students' reading rhythm, intonation, pauses, and encourage various ways of presenting their achievements, such as retelling stories and role-playing, to help students better understand and apply oral knowledge.

Ensure coherence and progression: Teachers should ensure that teaching activities are coherent and progress sequentially, making full use of the cyclical input in the TPRS teaching method to promote students' oral expression and comprehension skills.

In conclusion, when using the TPRS teaching method, teachers should flexibly control the classroom pace, summarize grammar structures, streamline story content, guide the rhythm and intonation of reading aloud, and ensure coherence and progression in teaching activities to improve students' oral expression skills and comprehension levels. These key points help effectively implement the TPRS teaching method and enhance the quality of oral teaching.

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