



The Chinese Pinyin System Scheme—An Effective Tool for International Chinese Language Teaching

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Abstract*

As a tool for legal spelling and phonetic transcription of Chinese, the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme is an indispensable tool for international Chinese teaching. International Chinese teachers should systematically understand it in theory, pay attention to some details in the teaching of Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, improve the teaching effect of Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, and avoid detours.

1. Introduction

At present, more and more foreigners are beginning to learn Chinese as a second foreign language. According to relevant statistics, "by the end of 2021, more than 180 countries and regions have carried out Chinese education, and 76 countries have incorporated Chinese into their national education systems. More than 25 million foreigners are learning Chinese, and nearly 200 million people have learned and used Chinese in total."(Ministry of Education,2022) The first thing that Chinese learners come into contact with is Pinyin. As the legal spelling and phonetic notation tool of Chinese, the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme is the "cornerstone of international Chinese teaching" (Zhao,2013) and the standard and authority that should be followed when learning Pinyin. "The application of the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme in the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language has become an irresistible world trend."(Lü,1983)

Article 18 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the National Common Language stipulates that "The Chinese Pinyin System Scheme is used as a tool for spelling and

phonetic transcription of the national common language and characters. The Chinese Pinyin System Scheme is a unified standard for the spelling of Chinese names, place names and the Roman alphabet of Chinese documents, and is used in areas where Chinese characters are inconvenient or cannot be used."(Law of the People's Republic of China on Standard Chinese Language,2022)The Chinese Pinyin System Scheme adopts the internationally popular Latin alphabet, so it is easy for foreign learners to master and facilitate international cultural exchanges. It is an effective tool for teaching and learning Chinese Putonghua.

2. Research Method

This study mainly uses interviews method. The main interview objects are Indonesian local Chinese teachers. They are from Universitas Hasanuddin, Universitas Negeri Makassar, Politeknik Negeri Bali, and Universitas Udayana. The Chinese pinyin issues that need to be noticed by Chinese learners are based on the 8-year international Chinese teaching practice observation of researchers.

3. Discussion

3.1 The Uses of the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme in International Chinese Teaching

As an effective tool, The Chinese Pinyin System Scheme has many uses in international Chinese teaching:

3.1.1 A “magic weapon” for international Chinese teachers.

The Chinese Pinyin System Scheme is a programmatic document in the teaching of Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. International Chinese teachers should be familiar with its content, know its nature, and know its reason. They should accurately and systematically master the Chinese phonetic system, practice basic skills, and pronounce accurate sounds. Only in this way can they correct pronunciation and correct pronunciation in Chinese teaching.

3.1.2 A “crutch” for foreign students to learn Chinese.

The Chinese Pinyin System Scheme is written in the international common Latin alphabet, which makes foreign students not feel strange when they see them at first sight. To some extent, it eliminates their fear of "the most difficult language in the world" and makes them quickly enter the learning state. It can be said that Pinyin learning is a crutch for foreign students to learn Chinese. Making good use of this crutch in the early stage is conducive to the learning of Chinese characters and grammar later.

3.1.3 An effective Pinyin typing tool.

After learning the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme, foreign students can use the "Pinyin Input Method" or "Sougou Pinyin Input Method" to complete the learning and working tasks such as typing, sending WeChat messages, and sending emails, so as to achieve the goal of real communication with Chinese people. Students only need to download the "Sougou Pinyin Input Method" app on the computer to achieve pinyin input. For example, five stroke input and stroke input, pinyin input makes the learning journey of foreign Chinese learners more convenient.

3.1.4 An important speech recognition tool.

Students who have learned Pinyin well generally have good pronunciation. When they issue a string of notes, modern speech recognition systems can correctly recognize their Chinese pronunciation, which enhances their confidence and reduces the trouble of typing.

3.1.5 Mastering Chinese Pinyin by using the phonetic order to search the dictionary.

At present, the common ways to look up dictionaries are radical retrieval and pinyin retrieval. The former is to search for Chinese characters according to the number of the first stroke, while the latter is to search for Chinese characters through the sequence of sounds. Having mastered the Chinese Pinyin, foreign students can use the phonetic order to search Chinese characters smoothly and quickly.

In a word, the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme has many uses in international Chinese teaching. However, in the practice of international Chinese teaching, "The Chinese Pinyin System Scheme has not attracted enough attention in the minds of teachers. Many teachers only know what the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme is, but do not know why it is. During the teaching process, they cannot give correct explanations to the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme. There is no way to correct the students' pronunciation, explain it inaccurately, and lack of oral and ear skills. Therefore, in Chinese teaching and learning, there is still considerable space to discover of the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme".(Zhao,2013)

3.2 Some Details Needing Attention in Phonetic Teaching

In the practice of teaching Chinese as a foreign language, many Chinese teachers have encountered problems in using the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme. Some scholars believe that this is the "defect" (Ding,2007)or "problem" (Li,2017)(Ye,1997)of the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme. In fact, most of these problems are caused by the lack of comprehensive understanding of the Chinese phonetic system by international Chinese teachers. Many teachers do not understand the subtle differences between the spelling form and the actual pronunciation, resulting in problems of one kind or another.

These detailed problems include several -i problems in letter spelling, -u and -ü problems, -ong and -iong problems, -in and -ing problems, abbreviation problem of- iou, - uen, - uei) , -o and -uo problems. This paper attempts to analyze these problems and put forward suggestions, hoping to help the International Chinese Pinyin teaching.

3.2.1 Pay attention to the three - i

As a teacher of Chinese as a foreign language, when teaching Pinyin, we must pay attention to the three “-i” in Pinyin. Although they are all written as -i, their pronunciation is not all pronounced as [i]. For example:

Position of -i	Real Pronunciation	Examples
Behind the initial j-,q-,and x-	Be read as [i]	ji[tei] qi[te'i] xi[ei]
Behind the initial z-,c-,and s-	Be read as[ɿ]	zi[tsɿ] ci[ts'ɿ] si[sɿ]
Behind the initial zh-,ch-,and sh	Be read asɿ]	zhi[tʂɿ] chi[tʂ'ɿ] shi[ʂɿ]

From the above table, we can easily see that the pronunciation of - i is different after different initials. Therefore, when teaching Chinese Pinyin, we must emphasize it repeatedly, and don't be confused by the writing form of Pinyin.

Here are some examples of common words.

Words that can be read as [i] such as:鸡蛋(jī dàn), 生气(shēng qì), 西瓜(xī guā)

Words that can be read as read [ɿ] such as:汉字(hàn zì), 一次(yí cì), 死亡(sǐ wáng)

Words that can be read as read[ɿ]such as:知道(zhī dào), 吃饭(chī fàn), 老师(lǎo shī)

During teaching and learning, teachers and students must pay attention to distinguish the - i in the following words, and must not mispronounce it.

司机(sī jī), 十四(shí sì), 四十(sì shí), 祭祀(jì sì), 其实(qí shí), 喜事(xǐ shì), 刺激(cì jī), 四肢(sì zhī), 启齿(qǐ chǐ), 知悉(zhī xī) and so on.

In the early stage of Pinyin teaching, omitting the -i behind z, c, s and zh, ch, sh can avoid students mixing with ji, qi, xi, which is easier to accept.

3.2.2 Pay attention to -u and -ü

-u and -ü are both round lip high vowels, one of which is the front high vowel, the other is the rear high vowel. They have different scope of application and cannot be misused. -u and -ü can be combined with n and l to form nu, lu, nü, lü, but j, q, x can only be combined with -ü, not with u.

	n	l	j	q	x
u	nu	lu			
ü	nü	lü	jü Be written as "ju"	qü Be written as "qu"	xü Be written as "xu"

It is easy to be confused here, it is easy to be confused. When ü is spelled with j, q and x, it is written as ju, qu, and xu, in other words, the two points above u are omitted. This is where foreigners are prone to make mistakes when learning Chinese Pinyin. International Chinese teachers must pay attention in teaching.

Here are some examples of common words.

The words that can be read as -u: 努力(nǔ lì), 陆地(lù dì) and so on.

The words that can be read as -ü: 女孩(nǚ hái), 绿色(lǜ sè), 举行(jǔ xíng), 来去(lái qù), 需要(xū yào) and so on.

The consonants and vowels in Chinese have a strong regularity. Mastering the rules of consonants and vowels can prevent learners from making mistakes in pinyin and spelling. For example, j, q, x can be spelled with the vowels of Qichihu (Finals begin with i) and Cuokouhu (Finals begin with -ü), but cannot be spelled with the vowels of Kaikou (Finals do not begin with -i, -u -ü) and Hekouhu (Finals begin with -u). (Zhao, 2013) There is no syllable "qu" in Chinese, "qu" cannot be pronounced as [tɕ'ʊ]. Another example is that the retroflex sounds zh, ch, sh, r cannot be matched with the vowels of Qiqihu (Finals begin with -i) and Cuokouhu (Finals begin with -ü), and the “师 (shī)” in the word of “老师(lǎo shī)” cannot be pronounced [ʃi].

Some scholars suggest that in the early stage of pinyin teaching, ju, qu and xu should be written as jü, qü and xü first. After a period of practice, when students get used to this pronunciation, they should be rewritten as ju, qu and xu.

3.2.3 Pay attention to -ong and -iong

-ong and -iong are both nasal finals, their actual pronunciations are ong[uŋ] and [yŋ]. The Chinese Pinyin Scheme uses "ong, iong" to denote [uŋ] and [yŋ] without "ung, üng" to make the character clear and avoid mixing of handwritten u and ü.

In practical teaching, Chinese learners often mispronounce ong and iong as [[oŋ] and [iŋ], for example, they mispronounce the "红(hóng)" as [xoŋ] and mispronounce the "熊" as [coŋ].

Here are some examples of other words.

Words with -ong are such as: 东边(dōng biān)、通过(tōng guò)、农民(nóng mín)、龙(lóng)、工人(gōng rén)、空调(kōng tiáo)、红色(hóng sè)、中国(zhōng guó)、充满(chōng mǎn)、容貌(róng mào)、匆忙(cōng máng)、松鼠(sōng shǔ) and so on.

Words with -iong are such as: 窘迫(jiǒng pò)、穷困(qióng kùn)、兄弟(xiōng dì)、拥抱(yōng bào) and so on.

At the beginning of Pinyin teaching, ong can also be rewritten as ung and iong as üng. After students master the actual pronunciation, they can rewrite to -ong and -iong again.

3.2.4 Pay attention to -in and -ing

"The actual pronunciation of -in and -ing is [iən] [iɛn], actually there's a weak transition [ə] in the middle, so it's very short and vague when you spell it. It is difficult to pronounce in and ing without this sound. In fact, it is very difficult to say in and ing alphabetically. This must be told to foreign students."(Huang & Liao,2017)

Here are some examples of other words.

Words with -in are such as: 宾馆(bīn guǎn)、拼音(pīn yīn)、敏感(mǐn gǎn)、您(ní n)、森林(sēn lín)、一斤(yì jīn)、亲爱(qīn ài)、新书(xīn shū)、因为(yīn wéi) and so on.

Words with -ing are such as: 冰箱(bīng xiāng)、平静(píng jìng)、名字(míng zì)、叮嘱(dīng zhǔ)、听到(tīng dào)、宁静(níng jìng)、零(líng)、北京(Běi jīng)、请进(qǐng jìn)、星星(xīng xing)、应该(yīng gāi) and so on.

When designing the teaching of -in and -ing, teachers need to inform students that the middle "e" should be read quickly, lightly and briefly, and do not stay for too long.

3.2.5 Pay attention to the abbreviation of -iou, -uen, and -uei

According to the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme, -iou, -uei, and -uen should be abbreviated as -iu, -ui, and -un when they are in front of the initials, such as niu, gui, lun, and the vowels which been abbreviated will cause certain cognitive difficulties for beginners, who will get used to reading that pronunciation directly mispronounce as [iu],[ui], and [un].

Here are some examples of other words.

Some of the words abbreviated -iou to -iu are such as: 谬论(miù lùn)、丢失(diū shī)、牛奶(niú nǎi)、溜走(liū zǒu)、纠正(jiū zhèng)、秋天(qiū tiān)、休息(xiū xi) and so on.

Some of the words abbreviated -uei to -ui are such as: 对错(duì cuò)、大腿(dà tuǐ)、规定(guī dìng)、吃亏(chī kuī)、灰色(huī sè)、追求(zhuī qiú)、吹牛(chuī niú)、喝水(hē shuǐ)、锐意(ruì yì)、嘴巴(zuǐ ba)、催促(cuī cù)、虽然(suī rán) and so on.

Some of the words abbreviated -uen to -un are such as:蹲下(dūn xià) , 吞下(tūn xià) , 无 论(wú lùn) , 棍子(gùn zi) , 困难(kùn nán) , 结婚(jié hūn) , 准备(zhǔn bèi) , 春天(chūn tiān) , 顺利(shùn lì) , 湿润(shī rùn) , 尊敬(zūn jìng) , 村子(cūn zi) , 孙子(sūn zi) and so on.

In the primary stage of Chinese pinyin teaching, students must be taught in accordance with their aptitude according to the characteristics of their mother tongue. International Chinese teachers can complete the pinyin according to the teaching needs, for example, the spelling of "xiu" is written as xi(o)u, "gui" is written as gu(e)i; "gun" is written as gu(e)n. This variant serves as a phonetic cue that the bracketed vowel should be omitted in formal writing.

3.2.6 Pay attention to -o and -uo

In the final table of the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme, there are two pronunciations -o and -uo, which should be paid attention to in teaching Chinese Pinyin as a foreign language.

-o is pronounced as [o] only when it is used alone, such as "o", which means "already know". When the -o is spelt with other initials, the pronunciation changes to -uo, such as bo [puo], po [p'uo], mo [muo], fo [fuo], etc. In the actual teaching of Pinyin, we can also make a temporary change and add the intermediate voice in the middle, so that the teaching effect may be better.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, Chinese phonetic teaching is not achieved overnight, need to work hard in the theory and practice.the key in the Chinese phonetic teaching is to allow students to set up a kind of correct pinyin concept: in the Chinese Pinyin System Scheme , there is not a one-to-one relationship between letters and sounds, and you can't exactly equate alphabetic pinyin with actual pronunciation ".(Wang,2005)Under the guidance of this concept, teachers should step by step guide students to pronounce according to the actual pronunciation, rather than simply looking at the appearance of letters to spell.

In addition, teachers should not be too strict with the pronunciation of foreign students at the beginning stage, because there are many Chinese people who cannot pronounce well with zh, ch, sh, r and j, q, x , and this does not affect the communication between them. Therefore, in the initial phonetic teaching, teachers should tolerate some phonetic errors of foreign students, as long as it does not affect communication, appropriate mistakes are allowed and accepted.

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