



The Study of the Connection in the Mother Language Education of China

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Abstract

In any country, the mother language education should be lifelong and continuous. Therefore, in China, the mother language education should be a whole education whether it is the basic mother language education or the higher mother language education. It should have the stages, but the connection of the education stages is more important; it should have the differences, but it should be progressive. In our country, there are still problems of teachers, teaching materials, teaching content and so on between the basic mother language education and the higher mother language education. Researching the problems from the perspective of the connection, we will be able to integrate and improve mother language education in a more wide scope.

Key words: Chinese mother language; Basic mother language education; Higher mother language education; Connection

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INTRODUCTION

International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in

November 1999. International Mother Language Day has been observed every year since February 2000. Director-general Irina Bokova of the UNESCO emphasized that the UNESCO advocated the teaching of mother language, because “The protection of languages ensures also that rare and indigenous knowledge is safeguarded and handed down. By giving each of us the means to make ourselves heard and be respected, this is also a force for social inclusion.” in her message on the occasion of International Mother Language Day on February 21, 2013. There is no doubt that mother languages and the mother language education are important. At present, there are still disputes about the definitions of “mother language” and “mother language education” in our country, but it is generally believed that our country’s first language is Chinese and the mother language education refers to Chinese language education. Therefore, here we do not need to have an academic debate, and only believe that the mother language conventionally refers to Chinese and the mother language education refers to Chinese language education.

Mother language education is a kind of lifelong education. In different stages of our life, the mother language education has a very important position. Therefore, the mother language education of the different stages should become a whole. The mother language education should have stages, but the connection of the education is more important; it should have the differences, but also need to be progressive; it should be independent, but also integrated. According to the actual situation in our country, the basic mother language education generally refers to the middle and primary school “language” courses, and the higher mother language education refers to the “college Chinese”, which is a kind of representative courses for non Chinese language major students.

In China, the research of the basic mother language education has been done relatively well. In 2012, the research papers of the language courses of primary and

secondary schools had 2,519 in the CNKI. The research of the higher mother language education started a little bit late, but it has also showed a trend of the fast rise in recent years. It can be said that the development of the basic mother language education and the higher mother language education are more vigorous in both the teaching practice and theory research. However, we find that the whole study of the basic mother language education and the higher mother language education is very limited. Only a few scholars have paid attention to the connection between the two, such as the master thesis, *A Preliminary Study of the Connection of the College Language Teaching and the Middle School Language Teaching*, written by Mei Jian of the College of Arts of Southwest Normal University in 2005; *The Research of the Connection of the College Language and the Primary and Middle School Language Education*, which was a key project of the Jiangsu Province's "Eleventh Five Year Plan" of education and science, chaired by Professor Qiao Guanghui of Southeast University; *The higher mother Language Education Research in Multidimensional Perspectives – Also Discuss Similarities and Differences of the Higher Mother Language Education and the Basic Mother Language Education*, written by Dr. Qi Feng of Fudan University and published by *Journal of Changchun Normal University* in 2011 and so on. In addition, there are some papers from different angles to analyze the differences of the basic mother language education and the higher mother language education, but the majority of them pay attention to teaching details, and the views are diffusing. Therefore, this paper tries to research the connection of the basic mother language education and the higher mother language education in order to have a positive inspiration for their teaching practice.

1. THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE BASIC MOTHER LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND THE HIGHER MOTHER LANGUAGE EDUCATION

There is no denying that basic education and higher education are very different in the teaching objectives, teaching methods and other aspects. However, the enrollment in colleges and universities has been expanded for more than ten years, and more and more people can study in a university now. China's higher education has been completed the transition from the elite education to the mass education. Therefore, to a certain extent, higher education has the nature of popularization and no longer is quite distinct from basic education.

Under this premise, basic education and higher education as different aspects of the education system need more interaction and integration. However, basic

education and higher education have been the lack of communication, and it forms the dual situations of "basic education is unseeing higher education and higher education is ignoring basic education", which lead to a lot of problems for a long time. In terms of its origin, it is the problem of the connection between higher education and basic education (Liu, Xu, Wang, & Wang, 2004).

(a) The Teaching Content Is Not Effectively Connected. Regardless of what level a Chinese language curriculum is at, it should be the unity of the humanity and tool nature, and the two are indispensable. In teaching practice, primary and secondary schools still make great efforts to teach the content and "Let students have the basic competence in oral and written communications." (The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2004). And university Chinese language education is generally paying more attention to humanity, and emphasizing the influence of literature. The basic mother language education and the higher mother language education all carry out their duties and it is no ground for blaming them, but any language learning should be connective and progressive, and the process may also have repetition and consolidation stages. Viewing the current teaching reality of the higher mother language education and the basic mother language education, we can see that there is no a connective teaching system, especially in knowledge of grammar, and there is also no continuous training in Chinese knowledge, so the old and new knowledge are not linked.

(b) The trial and 2011 Edition of the "*Chinese Language Curriculum Standards of the full time Compulsory Education*" clearly pointed out that "not deliberately pursue the system and wholeness of the knowledge of Chinese language." It is a good thing and intends to correct the irrational phenomenon: The tool nature is emphasized more than the human nature in the language education. However, in the implementation, there is deviation from the curriculum standards and there is overdoing in recent years. Many primary and secondary school teachers have greatly cut out the interpretation and training of Chinese knowledge, and think that studying the grammar and rhetoric is contrary to the spirit of the curriculum standards and have a negative impact on students' interest in learning the language. So the students have not been able to get the basic knowledge of grammar and enough training in basic education processes, which make the students have poor ability in the use of the language. After the students enter universities, teachers are not willing to spend time to make up the missed lessons so the students do not have systematic learning and training in the language knowledge. Some students do not understand some sentence structure, but suddenly need to enter a higher stage in the aesthetic appreciation of literature works and writing. This gap will inevitably lead to the confusion of the students, because some of them can not even write an application for leave.

(c) The gradual nature of the teaching materials is not obvious. In basic education, the language teaching materials have norms and meet the unified curriculum standards. The textbook versions are relatively less and the content is fine. The texts usually have suitable content after the deliberation and these texts are closely linked to the student ages and the syllabuses. However, there are various versions of Chinese language textbooks in higher education and the content is different. The content of these textbooks do not have good connection with the textbooks' content of primary and secondary schools, repeating too much or completely out of touch. The associate professor He Eryuan of Hangzhou Normal University had statistics in 2008: through the comparison between the *College Chinese* (8th ed.) edited by Xu Zhongyu, Qi Senhua and others and published by the East China Normal University Press and the middle schools' *Chinese Language* textbook published by the People's Education Press, there was a total of 124 texts and the same texts had 51, up to 41% (He, 2008). Of course, the classic works are worth to be read over and over again, and students can taste the different flavors in the different stages. However, in the present situation, the repetitive arrangement of classic works basically fails because of not paying attention to the characteristics of the different stages. The different parts of the same work or the different works of the same author should be arranged in accordance with the development of the students' psychology. Some college Chinese textbooks and workbooks' problems are simpler than the high schools'. The students easily have mental weariness when they use such textbooks and workbooks. The students may think that the language learning is the same and it may dampen the enthusiasm of students learning mother language in their whole life.

Looking over the language textbooks, it is not difficult to find the compilation and validation processes of basic education and higher education teaching materials are lack of the connection in my country and there is no a overall plan. The teaching material resources also fail to be integrated, and there are not evident gradual learning processes of the mother language in both the content and the form.

(d) It is lack of interaction among teachers. Primary and middle school language teachers or college Chinese teachers are two types of teachers in teaching the mother language. In basic education, the teachers' ability is more abundant and stable and they have a strong recognition for their profession. Their theoretical knowledge may be insufficient, but they have a deep understanding of basic education and long-term practice. In higher education, full-time university language teachers are very mobile and they are not many. There are many problems in their professional promotion and scientific research environment. They do not have a strong recognition for their profession. On January 11, 2011, the *Guangming Daily* published *The Mother Language Education in*

Colleges and Universities Should Be Strengthened Urgently -- Based on the Investigation and Analysis about More Than Ten Colleges and Universities at Home and Abroad (Anonymous, 2011) and it clearly wrote: "In our survey of six colleges and universities, several currently have only one or two teachers who are teaching college Chinese." This situation is very common. In most colleges and universities, young and middle aged teachers of the Chinese language department are responsible for teaching Chinese language in other departments. Their teaching time and energy are very limited and they may not have a deep understanding of the non Chinese major students' curriculum. Especially, most of these teachers got their master's degrees and doctor's degrees in literature. Their knowledge and research directions are mainly towards their own professions so college Chinese classes often are classes of literary appreciation.

As important parts of the mother language education, teachers of the basic and higher mother language education are different, and the exchanges between the two are not enough. Currently, it has been more common that the primary and secondary school teachers go to universities to get further education and training, which help them to effectively improve the theoretical level and teaching ability. However, the primary and secondary school teachers go to universities that are limited to the study of basic education and they do not have substantial contact with the higher mother language education. University teachers are still in the superior positions. Some university teachers who devote to the study of the basic mother language education will voluntarily go to primary and secondary schools to research, and others will not have any contact with basic education. The students' learning is not smooth because the two parts of teachers do not have good communication. University Chinese teachers do not know what teachers teach in primary and secondary schools, what are missing, what need to be deepened, of course, there is no a good connection.

(e) The teaching styles are very different. In basic education, Chinese language classes have been at the center position and have more class hours and standardized management. The teachers' teaching modes are relatively fixed, and teachers explain texts in detail. It has complete sets of practice, and students have preparation and review under the guidance of teachers. In higher education, the university Chinese courses have been at the edge. In universities, Chinese language courses may be required or optional. The Chinese language classes have less class hours and the classroom management is loose. The different teachers' teaching methods are also diverse, and teachers emphasize to interpret the works in multi angles. The students need to do their own extracurricular exercises to review the texts. The university Chinese language courses have been generally provided since the first year, so the students can clearly feel the differences of the teaching styles.

In fact, students are unable to realize a leap from the quantitative change to the qualitative change when they are from high schools to colleges, and the college entrance examinations are not the critical point of the qualitative change. However, China's basic education has huge differences from higher education for a long time, and students are easy dazed in different learning atmosphere. How can students be from the rote learning mode to put forward different views on literary works? It is a problem. If do not comply with basic laws of education and do not pay attention to reducing the gaps in the teaching styles, it is bound to lead to the connection problem in the mother language education. The connection problem not only will affect the improvement of the students' language proficiency, but also will shake the confidence of students learning their mother language.

2. THE MAIN FACTORS THAT AFFECT THE CONNECTION OF THE BASIC MOTHER LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND THE HIGHER MOTHER LANGUAGE EDUCATION

(a) The specific background of the social transition period is the main factor that affects the connection. China is in a stage of rapid transition from a traditional society to a modern society. Now some people like to pursue fame and money and educational administrators, teachers, students, parents and employers, without exception, have been affected. Schools pursue the enrollment rate or employment rate. Teachers only teach for the tests, students only learn the seemingly useful knowledge, parents only care about their children's scores, and employers only pay attention to job applicants' English test scores. In basic education, the quality education is mentioned for many years, but passing the college entrance examination still is the students' learning motivation. The curriculum reform and open classes become performances of some people in the process of implementation and do not have real content. In higher education, the language proficiency becomes an illusory useless thing. Students are keen to take examinations for certificates such as English and computer certificates. Colleges and parents are only concerned about the students finding jobs. Since the students can already read and write, further Chinese language learning apparently doesn't have any more practical help. Thus, less Chinese language class hours, poor ability of some teachers, students not paying attention to learning and only looking for fame and money are the main factors that put the higher mother language education in the marginalized embarrassing situation.

(b) The understanding and the implementation of ideas of education are different things. "The Chinese language

education, regardless of its function's number, has a basic function that should let students correctly understand and use the mother language." (Ni, 2013). Therefore, whether it is basic education or higher education, first of all, it should dedicate to the continuous improvement of the students' language ability, and let the students master their mother language tool; second, it influences the students through studying literary works, and promotes the formation and development of the students' Chinese language quality. However, in the actual teaching processes, the primary and middle schools generally begin to pay more attention to humanity, and universities are to basically abandon the tool nature. Even some people proposed

In middle schools, the basic skill training of the mother language has been completed. If some students' language skills still have many drawbacks, we should consider the efficiency of Chinese language teaching in middle schools. It is obviously not necessary to try to have general language skills training at the university level. (Cai, 2006)

Such ideas ignore the continuity of language learning and the connection of the mother language education. The discontinuous learning in the language skills aspect let the students to be lack of confidence and ability in appreciating humanity of literature works. The education idea has problems in both the understanding and practice.

(c) The integration of the educational mechanism has not been formed. The integration of the Chinese language education mechanism is defective in the textbook compilations and the teaching ideas. Basic education and higher education are the main links in the system of education. They have a common educational direction, but also affect each other. At present, there are more than nine million people taking part in the college entrance examination every year in China, and about 70% of them will begin to accept higher education. Students' growth and success are a continuous process, and each stage has its characteristics, but it is a whole process, which can not be separated. Therefore, higher education and basic education must also form an effective integration mechanism, so that students can enter higher education system smoothly when they complete basic education, and will not be disturbed by discontinuous factors. However, the management of basic education and higher education in China has their own systems, and in their own systems, the management has an orderly manner, but not connected to each other, so that the lifelong education system does not run smoothly. The main problems still are the problems of the flow of information, communication between departments, communication between teachers, and the long-term information barrier between higher education and basic education. It is lack of the connection between higher education and basic education that damages the mother language education.

CONCLUSION AND ENLIGHTENMENT

(a) We need to have clear ideas in the mother language education. Professor Pan Yong of Zhejiang Normal University has spent years to study the mother language education and he said: "Students are awakening in the mother language, touched in the mother language, intoxicated in the mother language, growing and adult in the mother language—this is the common value pursuit of the mother language education in various countries." (Pan, 2009) Therefore, it is not an advisable idea to finish all learning of the mother language in a few years or more than a decade. It is not the end of the mother language education for someone if he can read and write. Education administrators, teachers, students, and parents should clearly know the final point of the mother language education and studying the mother language is not for fame and money. Only by the joint efforts of all of us, we can let the mother language education of our country finally achieve the goal: Students grow up to inherit the universal values of the Chinese national culture.

(b) We should integrate the mechanism of the mother language education. Basic education and higher education should form an effective integration mechanism, which makes the information flow and let the two connect. If we treat the mother language education from the perspective of the lifelong education, we will make the idea of lifelong education be better implemented. Basic education and higher education should have a good mutual influence and mutual promotion, also mutual restraint and mutual understanding. This requires the education departments have a unified understanding, but it also need the schools, colleges and teachers to have the initiative, and experts and scholars pay enough attention to the connection. We should make efforts to form a joint force in the practice of the theories and teaching management and form a joint force from the overall plan to the plan implementation, and gradually establish and improve the integration mechanism of the basic and the higher mother language education.

(c) We should have various practices in the basic and the higher mother language education. Under the premise of the unified education idea and mechanism, we should promote effective teaching ways through learning from each other. For example, in the higher mother language education, there are the multimedia technology, a variety of evaluation methods, seminars, discussing the literary works' history, and so on, which can be used for reference methods in primary and middle school language teaching.

In the basic mother language education, there are small class teaching, oral communication, comprehensive learning and other ways, which are also worthy to be promoted in college Chinese. Learn from each other and pay attention to the actual effect.

We continue to emphasize that the mother language education is a lifelong education. Therefore, considering the nature of the education, we should integrate the basic mother language education the higher mother language education from the perspective of the lifelong education. Although, in our country's education practice, there are many problems in the connection of the basic and the higher mother language education, we believe that the basic mother language education and the higher mother language education will move towards to form a complete system of the mother language education and it will promote the sustained and healthy development of our mother language education as long as we persist in the development direction of the mother language education and adhere to the lifelong education idea.

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