

КЫТАЙ ТИЛИНДЕГИ ГОМОФОНДОРДУ ОКУТУУ ЖӨНҮНДӨ ИЛИКТӨӨ

ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ КИТАЙСКИХ ОМОФОНОВ

PEDAGOGICAL INQUIRY OF HOMOPHONE IN TEACHING CHINESE AS A  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE

**Аннотация:** Обучение китайским иероглифам является важной частью международного обучения китайскому языку, а также трудным моментом в обучении. После эволюции китайских иероглифов с течением времени появилось много слов с небольшим количеством звуков, поэтому обучение омофонам стало трудным моментом в обучении китайским иероглифам. С помощью классификации омофонов в этой статье исследуются методы обучения международным китайским омофонам, такие как сочетание формы и значения иероглифов, развитие осознания компонентов, сосредоточение внимания на использовании контекста и интеграция культурных элементов.

**Аннотация:** Кытай иероглифтерин окутуу эл аралык кытай тили окутуунун маанилүү бөлүгү болуп саналат, ошондой эле Кытай тили окутуусунда кыйын болгон түйүн болуп саналат. Убакыттын өтүшү менен Кытай иероглифтеринин эволюциясынан кийин, символдордун көп болуу ага тиешелүү үндөрдүн аз болуу феномени пайда болгон, ошондуктан гомофондорду окутуу Кытай иероглифтерин окутууда оор пункткага айланган. Бул макалада гомофондорду классификациялоо аркылуу иероглифтерди жана маанисин айкалыштыруу, компонент тууралуу маалымдуулукту өстүрүү, контекстти колдонууга көңүл буруу жана маданият элементтерин интеграциялоо сыяктуу эл аралык Кытай гомофондорун окутуу ыкмалары изилденет.

**Abstract:** Teaching Chinese characters, a vital component in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, is difficult in the teaching process. As there are fewer sounds than characters in Chinese due to epochal evolution, homophone teaching has been the crux of Chinese character teaching. Based on the classification of homophones, this article probes into effective teaching methods: training learner's awareness of component combined with form and meaning, focusing on the context, and incorporating cultural elements in teaching.

**Негизги сөздөр:** Кытай тилин Чет тил катары окутуу, гомофон, окутуу

**Ключевые слова:** исследование преподавания, международных китайских, омофонов

**Key Words:** Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, Homophone, Pedagogical Inquiry

### Introduction

The enormous number of Chinese characters, the complexity of form, the finite number of syllables and the common phenomenon of homophones have generated perplexity for overseas students and increased the difficulty of learning Chinese characters. The pedagogical research and results of homophones in Chinese as a second language embody the followings:

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One is regional and national research. Aiming at students from different countries and with different native language backgrounds, Zhang Chunxia (2015), Zhang Jinpeng (2016), Peng Xiaocan, Lu Sitong (2017) and Zhang Li (2020) have conducted a research concerning the biased errors of homophones, analyzed the causes and put forward the teaching methods.

The other one is the research contrasting word syllabus and corpus. According to the pedagogical research of homophones in *National General Syllabus for Chinese Language Teaching*, Wu Zhen<sup>①</sup> (2017) has explored effective ways to teach Chinese as a foreign language, especially, methods to teach homophones. Based on diverse corpuses and Chinese proficiency level of international students, Guo Li (2011), Chen Yujun (2016), Lin Xia (2016), Wang Tiantian (2018), Liu Yue (2013) and Liu Di (2020), have carried out a research concerning the analysis of biased errors in homophones, and put forward pedagogical countermeasures.

In addition, Xiong Chunhua<sup>②</sup>(2013) has put forward six teaching principles based on the comparative investigation of teaching and learning. The principles and methods suggest that teachers should follow the principles systematically and progressively when they conduct teaching, and teachers should pay more attention to the context and the unified teaching of sound, form and meaning during the process.

Homophones are a group of characters that are pronounced likewise, however, are differed in meaning. According to the forms, Su Peicheng<sup>③</sup>(1993) has categorized homophones as homographs and heteromorphic homophones. This article only discusses homophones with the same initials, vowels and tones. The classification of homophones may contribute to individualized teaching, which can help international Chinese teachers employ different teaching methods aiming at different kinds of homophones. The teaching method will help the students master and use the homophones with accuracy and agility and highly improve their ability of reading and writing Chinese.

### **Category One: Homographs**

Homographs are characters sharing the same forms and sounds. For instance, the character 花 in the word “花朵” can also be used in the word “花钱”. “向” is also a homophone in the word “方向” and “向来”. Li Qirui<sup>④</sup> (1985) has considered most of the homographs as the same character. Other homographs that have evolved in meanings can be regarded as polysemic characters. Therefore, homographs can be seen as one character with multiple meanings. When learning, we should first understand its basic meaning, master the relationship between multiple meanings, and then learn other meanings step by step from shallow to deep. It should be distinguished from polyphonic and polysemous phenomena by combining parts of speech and context. In the sentence “今天下雨，我骑车差点儿摔倒，好在我一把把把把住了。”，the character 把 functions as measure word, preposition, noun and verb. In the sentence “校长说，校服上除了校徽别别别的。”，the character 别 is used as adverb, verb and pronoun.

### **Category Two: Heteromorphic Homophones**

Heteromorphic homophones are the homophones with different forms. In the development history of Chinese character research, the most influential one is 施氏食狮史 published by Mr. Zhao Yuanren on Guangming Daily in 1957: “石室诗士施氏，嗜狮，誓食十狮。施氏时时适市视狮。十时，适十狮适市。是时，适施氏适市。施氏视是十狮，恃矢势，使是十狮逝世。氏拾是十狮尸，适石室。石室湿，氏使侍拭石室。石室拭，氏始试食是十狮。食时，始识是十狮，实十石狮尸。试释是事。” The essay, which is regarded as “only to be seen but not to be read out”, expresses a complete story with only one pronunciation of “shi”, showing the richness of homophones in Chinese language. Generally speaking, heteromorphic homophones are classified as:

#### 1. Synonyms

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Synonyms are the homophones with similar form and meaning. Synonyms are affected by sound, form and meaning. Meanwhile, they are discerned by forms and meanings. For instance, the characters 暴 and 爆 both have the meaning of sudden. And the characters 度 and 渡, both of them mean pass. These two pairs of characters have the same components. They are the synonyms with similar forms. However, in the specific use, we should pay attention to the subtle differences between the ideographs of Chinese characters, which can be distinguished by implication and association.

#### 2. Homonyms

Homonyms are the homophones with the similar forms and different meanings. Homonyms are affected by sound and form. The identification focuses on forms. For example, in the pair 蓝 and 篮, 蓝 means blue while 篮 means bamboo basket; in the pair 情 and 晴, 情 means emotion, while 晴 means clear without clouds. Most of these homophones are pictophonetic characters, which can be distinguished by distinguishing the composing parts of the character.

#### 3. Heteromorphic Synonyms

Heteromorphic synonyms are the homophones with different forms and similar meanings. Heteromorphic synonyms are affected by sound and meaning. The identification focuses on meanings. The three characters 的, 地 and 得 can be shown as an example. They share the same sound *de*, and all of them are auxiliary words, respectively matches with attributive, adverbial, complement words. However, 的 mainly embellishes nouns, 地 mainly embellishes verbs and 得 can be used after verbs to express possibility and after adjectives to express degree. Also take the sentence “对这个问题的看法” for example, the “的” in this sentence is used after the attributive “问题”; “他很痛快地答应了”, the “地” here is used after the adverbial “痛快”; in the sentence of “天气热得厉害”, the “得” is used before the complement “厉害”. This kind of homophones can also be distinguished according to the rules of Chinese grammar.

#### 4. Heterographic Homonyms

Heterographic homonyms are homophones with different forms and meanings. Heterographic homonyms are mostly affected by the sound rather than form and meaning. When we take the characters 关 and 观 as an example, we can learn that 关 means close and 观 means watch. What's more, regarding to the characters 在 and 再, 在 as a preposition means at, concerning the time, place, range and scenario, but 再 as an adverb means again. Such homophones can be identified only in their specific context.

### Part Three: Pedagogical Countermeasures

The root cause of large numbers of homophones and difficult to acquire is the lack of syllables of Chinese characters. If the international students can not correctly master and use homophones, it is bound to have a bad impact on their Chinese writing, and then restrict their written expression ability. Combining with my own teaching practice, the author puts forward the following teaching countermeasures which are universal to homophone teaching:

#### 1. Integrating structure and meaning

Li Xiangping<sup>⑤</sup>(2008) has pointed out Chinese characters are ideographic characters formed by rationales. The rationales are word laws, which are manifested in the connection of character pattern, pronunciation and meanings. In Chinese character teaching, students can be helped to comprehend and memorize the form, sound and meaning of the words via learning word laws explained by teacher's instruction. The form and meaning of Chinese characters are closely combined. Therefore, the form of Chinese characters always contains some meaning information that can be analyzed, which determines that the analysis of Chinese character configuration cannot be separated from two aspects: configuration and meaning. The construction of Chinese characters includes the number of components, the way of assembling components, the position of components, and so on. The construction of Chinese characters is initially shown as a subjective

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construction intention, but after being recognized by users, it becomes an objective component, which is the construction idea and the rationale of Chinese characters.

It is precisely because Chinese characters, which are formed with solid rules, are the unity of sound, form and meaning. Therefore, homophones teaching in Chinese as foreign language can't be conducted without the unity of sound, form and meaning. Especially, when teaching heterographic homonyms, the teaching method of combining the characters' sounds, forms and meanings plays an important part, meaning is known by form. Homophone groups with significant difference such as 名 and 明, 手 and 首, 在 and 再 will be more accessible to memorize if they are integrated with sounds, forms and meanings.

### 2. Training awareness of components

The Chinese characters are formed according to ascending order of strokes, components and whole words. Hu Wenhua<sup>⑥</sup>(2008) has pointed out that Chinese characters are formed with components that are structured to express their meanings. Cui Yonghua<sup>⑦</sup>(1997) has explored the feasibility of teaching Chinese characters by components in three perspectives, which are the length, appellation and meaning of the components. International Chinese teachers should have awareness of component while teaching homophones.

Particularly during the process of teaching homonyms, the characters can be disassembled into components that are founded likewise and analyzed otherwise. Such as homonyms 情 and 晴, 城 and 诚, 辩 and 辨, they will be easier to be distinguished both from the form and meaning if component teaching method is used. Meanwhile, the explanation of the origin and evolution about Chinese characters can be added when it's necessary.

The homophones mentioned above are all pictophonetic characters, which fully shows that not only the pictophonetic characters account for a large proportion in Chinese characters, but also there are quite a lot of pictophonetic characters in homophones. Therefore, teachers who teach Chinese as a foreign language need to make good use of the features of pictophonetic ideographs and phonological ability. If it is difficult to analyze homophones according to the components because of simplification or deformation, the explanation of the origin and evolution of Chinese characters can be added to the learning of components after explaining the basic meanings of the characters.

### 3. Emphasizing on context

Homophones teaching in Chinese as a foreign language should emphasize on the context and the presentation of model sentences. In Chinese language, characters are attached to words, which are the composition of sentences. Characters make no sense when they are separated from words and sentences. Thus, grouping words and making sentences have become especially important. Besides, Chinese characters cannot be divorced from analysis and usage of specific context. As for some homophones, the meanings can be distinguished by grouping words, e.g. 座位 and 坐下. However, for the heteromorphic synonyms, it is more accessible to identify them through making sentences in specific context. For example, “漂亮的女孩在开心地跳舞.” It follows then that teachers must set appropriate contexts and examples for students to sense the meaning of homophones. Then teachers can carry out comparative teaching and learning of homophones through the setting of typical illustrative sentences. By this means, students will grasp the forms of homophones, know how to differentiate the meanings of homophones and understand the usage of homophones in specific context.

There are some homophones only when it's put in words group, the corresponding meaning has some subtle differences, which is not easy to distinguish and needed to be combined in the context in teaching. Take the words “学力” and “学历” for example, “学力” refers to the attainments and abilities in learning, it emphasizes the actual level of education and knowledge, such as “他具有大学本科的同等学力”. Instead of “力” in the word; “学历” refers to a person's academic experience, which can be proved by materials such as diplomas, such as “学校要求提供研究生的学历”. In this group of homophones, the meaning of “学” is unchanged, which means learning, knowledge, and

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the homophone “力” into “历” the word meaning has changed, from the ability to the experience of learning

### 1. Integrating with cultural elements

Language teaching is inseparable from cultural teaching. Chinese character teaching is a part of Chinese teaching, and homophone teaching is also a part of Chinese character teaching. Therefore, homophone teaching should also incorporate cultural elements in the teaching process.

Zhao Jinming<sup>⑧</sup>(1987) has interpreted homophony in *Homophony and Culture* as “Generally, it is inclusive of sharing the characters and words with the same or similar sounds when ideas are expressed. Thereby, kinds of linguistic phenomenon which contains conscious, unconscious and forbidden homophony have occurred and caused special effect”.

Cui Yueyue<sup>⑨</sup>(2022) has considered homophony as a replacement of proper sound via making use of Chinese characters with the same or similar sounds. As to teaching Chinese as a foreign language, to add homophony culture can not only enhance the ability of learning target language for second language learners, but also bring more profound cognition of the target language culture for the learners. Just as “东边日出西边雨，道是无晴(情)却有晴”，the homonym of sunny “晴” and emotional “情” is a euphemistic expression of Chinese people's emotional thoughts and ways of thinking.

For these reasons, it is necessary to assimilate cultural elements reflected by Chinese characters into teaching homophones. It is practical and interesting in the teaching. For instance, there are many two-part allegorical sayings in Chinese. They have displayed a fine sense of humor by using the homophones. Here are some examples: 外甥打灯笼：照舅(旧) means a nephew is carrying a lantern to look for his uncle—light up his uncle. In this two-part allegorical saying, 照舅(light up his uncle) and 照旧(as usual) share the same sounds with different meanings; 孔夫子搬家

——尽书(输) means Confucius is moving with his books everywhere. In this two-part allegorical saying, 尽书(books everywhere) and 尽输(always lose) also have the same sounds but different meanings; 过年吃鱼，年年有余 means if we eat fish on Chinese New Year's Day, our lives will become affluent. In this saying, 鱼(fish) and 余(affluent) have the same sound but different meanings. Here, Chinese social custom has been embodied with homophony.

Another custom of Chinese New Year's Day is to put up the red paper with 福 character upside down. In Chinese, 福 means happiness. When it is put upside down, people will say “福到(倒)了”，which means happiness is coming. Because the characters 倒 (upside down) and 到(coming) have similar sounds.

In addition, some Internet buzzwords in modern life also use homophony. 洗具 which means

sanitary appliance, shares the same sound of the word 喜剧, which means comedy. The word 杯具

which means cups, shares the same sound of the word 悲剧, which means tragedy.

Moreover, the slogan 千里音(姻)缘一线牵 means a fate match across a thousand miles is drawn by a thread. In this saying, the homophony words 音缘(voice contact) and 姻缘(fate match) have been applied cleverly for China Telecom advertising. So does a body wash advertising, its slogan 随心所浴(欲), which means taking a shower at your will, uses the homophony of 浴(wash) and 欲(willingness). The use of homophony in these slogans enhances the artistic charm of advertising language.

### Conclusion

Homophones have been a significant component of Chinese characters. To teach homophones has been a vital part of teaching Chinese as a foreign language. The key to homophone teaching is to grasp the characteristics of different types of homophone, and then adopt different, appropriate

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and flexible teaching methods. This paper theoretically categorizes homophones based on modern research of Chinese characters and proposes countermeasures aiming at problems occurred during homophone teaching. Under the guidance of the second language teaching methods, measures that are stated in the paper will increase the efficiency of teaching Chinese homophones for the second language learners.

**Annotation :**

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