

Using Visual and Multimedia Material in Teaching Chinese Culture

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INTRODUCTION

Chinese language is gaining popularity across the world. In order to expand cross cultural learning, Sri Lanka has stepped towards teaching Chinese language to the local community. The University of Kelaniya offers Chinese Studies for the three year Bachelor Degree and the four year Honours Degree Programme. This research is based on the course units offered in the Bachelor Degree Programme, CHIN 23023 Chinese culture & civilization- I and CHIN 33023 Chinese culture & civilization - II. The content of these Course units are all related to Chinese culture including festivals, Chinese food, tea culture, Chinese paintings, martial arts and traditional costumes.

BACKGROUND

In comparison to the Sri Lankan culture the traditions, life style, customs and the beliefs in Chinese culture are different. Therefore, the students find it difficult to understand certain aspects of Chinese culture. For an example, the authentic Chinese food culture is not familiar to Sri Lanka because the taste of food differs from region to region in China. In Southern China only spicy food will be eaten, but in Sri Lanka there is no marked difference of the taste of food varieties typical of regions. Thus, it was suggested to use multimedia based visual materials to make the students familiarise themselves with these aspects of the Chinese culture.

PURPOSE

This article examines how the multimedia and visual materials could be used in Foreign Language Teaching, specially focusing how effective the use of visual materials in teaching Chinese culture, in relation to the major

language areas and skills. Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language to students at the Department of Modern Languages, University of Kelaniya was a challenging task as it was difficult during the lectures to portray the Chinese culture only through printed text material. The students who have not visited the target language country find it difficult to understand certain aspects of Chinese culture. This study also examines what difficulties the students of Chinese language encountered in learning Chinese culture and how far the use of multimedia material were successful in giving them a clearer impression of the Chinese culture.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on classroom observations and face-to-face interviews with lecturers in Chinese of the Department of Modern Languages to find out what difficulties they have encountered in teaching Chinese culture to Sri Lankan students.

CONCLUSION

Through the findings of the research we conclude that the effective use of multimedia based visual materials is a successful method in teaching Chinese culture. The students find it easier to familiarize themselves with the aspects of Chinese culture with the help of visual materials and enhance their knowledge of Chinese culture.

KEYWORDS

multimedia material, Chinese culture, teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in Sri Lanka

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