A Psychological Research on Characters in Middle School Chinese Textbooks in China

UNE RECHERCHE PSYCHOLOGIQUE SUR LES CARACTERES DE MATERIELS CHINOIS DANS LES ECOLES SECONDAIRES EN CHINE

Yao Benxian[1]   **Wang Daoyang[2]**

Abstract: This study made a statistical study and analysis of the Chinese textbooks for six-year-system students. The results showed: (1) in terms of nationality, the number of characters of the Han nationality was 4 times as many as that of minority nationalities. 74.3 per cent of the students can't tell the differences. In comparison, in primary school Chinese textbooks (The People's Education Press, in 1993)[1], the progress had been made without doubt; (2) in terms of countries, the number of Chinese characters was 3.98 times as many as that of foreigners and the description of foreigners did not meet well the requirement of times development; (3) in terms of genders, characters of male were 2.4 times as many as female; (4) in terms of live environment, the proportion of the characters living in ancient was 46.7%. So the description of the contemporary and rural circumstance was not enough;(5) concerning identity and occupation, they focus on men of letters and so on, but pay little attention to ordinary people occupation.
Key words: Middle School Chinese Textbooks, Students, Character's Feature

Résumé: Cette etude a fait des statistiques et l'analyse de matériels chinois pour les élèves du cycle de 6 ans d'études . Le résultat a montré: (1) En terme de nationalité, le nombre de caractères de la nationalité Han était de 4 fois celui des groupes minorités. 74.3 % des élèves ne parviennt pas à dire les différences. Comme comparaison, dans les écoles primaires, les matériels chinois (la Presse d' Education du peuple, en 1993)[1], il est indoutable qu'ils ont connu un progrès; (2) En terme de pays,le nombre de caractères chinois était de 3.98 fois celui des étrangers dont la description n'ont pas satisfait les demandes du développement; (3) en terme de genre, les caractères masculins étaient de 2.4 fois ceux des féminins; (4) En terme de l'environnement de vie, la proportion de caractères anciens était de 46.7%. Donc la description de la contemporaine et la circomstance rurale n'était pas suffisante;(5) Concernant l'identité et l'occupation, ils mettent un accentt sur les hommes de letttres etc, mais mettent très peu d'attention à l' occupation des gens ordinaires.
Mots clés: Matériels Chinois dans les Ecoles Secondaires, Elèves, caractéristiques des caractères

1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers have studied something about Chinese Textbooks, and they have achieved some meaningful conclusions. Furthermore, they have given some valuable suggestions [1]. Chinese Textbooks have value orientation, cultural composition, meaning and instrumental function. These factors play an important role on students' learning and accepting conventional culture and value norms, and on students' forming social roles [2-4]. However, those researches have two characteristics. One is "only-one-facet", that is, they only studied one facet, such as sexual role, value orientation, social role, and so on; the other is "primarilizing", that is, the research subjects were almost primary Chinese textbooks [5]. In fact, middle school students are in their youth when is the vital period for forming their views on the world and value.

And the formations of these views are the important marks of the maturation of the youth's mental development [6]. Therefore, we selected middle school Chinese textbooks as the subjects, and had a statistical analysis on such aspects of characters in textbooks as gender, nationality, country, living environment and occupation

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The selected textbooks were the publications of the people's education press, which were first used as full-time common middle school textbooks in 2000. The statistical unit was respective paper, which had characters in it. These papers included the papers mainly described characters (we called these papers "character papers") and those mainly described scenes but reflected characters (we call those papers "non-character papers"). The statistical characters were the main characters both in character and non-character papers. The statistical indexes included the following:

2.1 Nationality: Only referred to the nationality of Chinese characters. Mainly included: Han nationality, minority nationality, complex (having Han and minority together) and none (unrecognized nationalities).

2.2 Country: Based on that the main characters were Chinese or foreign, we grouped them into two conditions: China and foreign countries.

2.3 Gender: According to the gender of the main characters, we grouped them into four conditions: male, female, complex (having males and females together) and none (unrecognized genders).

2.4 Living Environment: The social environment the main characters lived in. Grouping from two perspectives: according to the times, we grouped them into ancient (before 1848), not-long-ago (1848-1949), modern (1949-1978), contemporary (after 1978); according to the place, we grouped them into urban, rural, complex (having characters in urban and rural areas together) and none (unrecognized places).

2.5 Occupation: Either the common or the distinguished were statistical by general occupations described in papers.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Nationality

Based on the statistical analysis, there're 241 papers in all, and main characters in 43 papers of all were foreigners. According to our research design, then only the nationalities of the main characters in 171 papers of all got analyzed. Of these 171 papers, the main characters in 32 papers were Han nationality, which accounted for 18.7%; and in another 8 papers were minority nationalities, which accounted for 4.7%. In these 8 papers, Man nationality appeared twice, Mongolian twice and Yao nationality only once. Besides, there're another 3 papers in which the nationality of main characters was unrecognized. On the whole, the main characters in 127 papers had unrecognized nationalities, which accounted for 74.3%. And the percentage of unrecognized nationalities in Chinese textbooks increased gradually from junior middle school to senior middle school.

3.2 Country

In all 214 papers, the main characters in 171 papers were Chinese, which accounted for 79.9%; and in the other 43 papers were foreign, which accounted for 20.1%. Among these foreigners, living in ancient period appeared for 17 times, not-long-ago for 20 times, modern and contemporary for 3 times respectively. Viewing from gender, male appeared for 12 times, female for 9 times, complex and none for 11 times respectively.

3.3 Gender

In all 241 papers, the main characters in 83 papers were male, which accounted for 38.8%; and in another 34 papers were female, which only accounted for 15.9%. It's worth noticing that complex and none accounted for 35.3%.

3.4 Living Environment

3.4.1 The Times

In all 241 papers, the main characters in 100 papers were ancient, which accounted for 46.7%; in 57 papers were not-long-ago, which accounted for 26.6%; in 34 papers were modern, which accounted for 15.9%; and in 23 papers were contemporary, which accounted for 10.8%. The proportion of these four conditions was 4.3:2.5:1.5:1.

3.4.2 The Place

In all 241 papers, the main characters in 67 papers were urban, which accounted for 31.3%; in 26 papers were

rural, which accounted for 12.1%, and in 101 papers were none, which accounted for almost 50%.

3.5 Occupation

The unrecognized occupations appeared for 76 times, which accounted for 35.5%, the most of all. Writers appeared for 43 times, which accounted for 20.0%; politicians for 22 times, which accounted for 10.2%; peasants for 14 times, which accounted for 6.5%; officers for 12 times, which accounted for 5.6%; scientists for 10 times, which accounted for 4.7 %; students for 7 times, which accounted for 3.3%. Besides these occupations, there're artists, teachers, businessmen, policemen, doctors and clergies. They appeared for 21 times in all.

4. DISCUSSIONS

According to the results, we could see the following features of the main characters in middle school Chinese textbooks:

4.1 In terms of nationality, characters of Han nationality were more than those of minorities. In general, characters of Han nationality were 4 times as many as those of minorities in middle school Chinese textbooks (The People's Education Press, in 2000). However, characters of Han nationality were 25.2 times as many as those of minorities in primary school Chinese textbooks (The People's Education Press, in

1993). In comparison, the progress had been made without doubt.

4.2 In terms of country, papers in which main characters were Chinese were 3.98 times as many as those in which main characters were foreign. This phenomenon prevented students from knowing about foreign society objectively.

4.3 In terms of gender, the increase of conditions of complex and none minimized the gender difference. This contributed to cultivating students' views of gender fairness, but it also prevented students' form forming sexual role.

4.4 In terms of living environment, the description of ancient and not-long-ago environments was far more than that of modern and contemporary environments. So, the reflection of the characteristics of times was not enough. The description of urban life was more than that of rural life. This wasn't in accordance with the fact that 70% of Chinese people live in rural areas. Therefore, this was unfair for rural students. The contents of textbooks weren't the reflection of their real life. As a result, they had some difficulty in understanding the contents.

4.5 In terms of occupation, most described occupations were high social positions. Especially, the description of writers accounted for a large proportion in middle school Chinese textbooks. In contrast, the description of students accounted for a large proportion in primary school Chinese textbooks. It's evident that the description of the common occupations was not enough.

REFERENCES

Wang Yousheng. (2000). A analysis on cultural composition in the Chinese textbooks nine-year-system education. *Educational research and experiment,* (1): 34-38.

Wang Yousheng. (2000). A analysis on sociology in the Chinese textbooks. *Educational Science*, (3): 21-24.

Wu Yongjun. (2000). 'A analysis on value orientation in primary school Chinese textbooks of Jingsu Education Press. *Jingsu Education Research,* (4): 42-44.

Xu Zhengyuan, and so on. (1987). *Children's developmental psychology*. JiLin Education Press, 402.

Yao Benxian, Tu Yuanling. (2003). A psychological research on characters in primary school Chinese textbooks. *Psychological Science*, (1): 74-77.

Zhu Zhiyong. (1998). A research on social role in junior middle school Chinese textbooks in mainland and Taiwan. *Comparison Educational Research*, (5): 39-43.

THE AUTHORS

Yao Benxian, born in 1963, now is director of Science Research Institution in Anhui Normal University. Professor of Psychology, Master's Instructor. He is mainly engaged in the study of school mental health education and social psychology. He has published more than 50 essays on such core magazines as "Psychological Science" and "Chinese Journal of Education".

Address: College of Education Science, Anhui Normal University, Wuhu, 241000, P.R. China.

E-mail: bxy5909@163.com

Wang Daoyang, College of Education Science, Anhui Normal University, Wuhu, 241000, P.R. China.