A Comparative Study on the Acquisition of Power Relationship Terms in Chinese by International Students

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ABSTRACT

Chinese has a rich and diverse vocabulary of terms, especially verbs, expressing power relationships. This paper selected 25 power relationship terms from the Chinese Proficiency Scale for International Chinese Education, and used a true-false format to test the differences in acquisition between international students from Confucian cultural circles and those from non-Confucian cultural circles. The study found that: 1) The acquisition levels of both groups are generally behind that of ordinary vocabulary. 2) There is a significant difference in the acquisition levels between the two groups, with the former performing better than the latter. 3) There is a significant difference in the acquisition of these terms in administrative and family settings between the two groups, with the former performing better than the latter, but there is no significant difference in the acquisition of terms in other settings such as education. In response to these findings, the paper used interview data to provide mutual confirmation, and applied theories related to learning input, language transfer, and cultural circles to analyze and interpret the results. Finally, the paper made targeted suggestions for the teaching of power relationship terms.

INTRODUCTION

Chinese has a large number of unique words that express unequal relationships between people, such as "拜见" (to pay respects to), "孝顺" (to be filial to), and "赏赐" (to bestow gifts). Ma Qingzhu (1997) analyzed the role relationship orientation of a class of special Chinese verbs and proposed the terms "upward verbs" and "downward verbs"; Zhang Guoxian (1997) explored the factors affecting the understanding of "two-syllable verb + two-syllable noun" and proposed the terms "low-toward verbs" and "high-toward verbs"; Zhang Zhiyi and Zhang Qingyun (2005) analyzed the combination of semantic features and proposed the terms "upward verbs" and "downward verbs"; Guo Xi (2012) examined the category of "speaking" words and proposed the terms "non-egalitarian speech words," which are divided into "high-level speech words" and "low-level speech words," and pointed out that there are "hierarchic words" in Chinese; Zhang Xin (2016) studied the semantics and syntax of "予取" (to take at one's will) -type verbs and

proposed the terms "power relationship verbs," which are divided into "high-power verbs" and "low-power verbs" according to the power difference between the roles involved. These studies prove that there are indeed some verbs in Chinese that express power relationships, and they have specific syntactic and pragmatic constraints.

We define words that can express power relationships as "power relationship words," which mainly include verbs, as well as some adjectives and nouns, such as "kind," "prime minister," which are widely found in ancient and modern Chinese vocabulary.

The collocation and pragmatic background knowledge of power relationship words are common knowledge for native speakers, but this may cause misunderstanding and misuse for second language learners. For example, the meanings of "to marry" and "to be married to" are highlighted by the words "娶" and "嫁," respectively, which reveal the unequal power relationship between men and women in the patriarchal society of ancient times: men dominate marriage, women are subordinate, and men are superior to women. When forming phrases and sentences, only "男人娶女人" (men marry women) and "女人嫁给男人" (women are married to men) are possible, and they cannot be reversed. The word "结婚" (to marry), on the other hand, emphasizes the equal relationship between men and women, and is translated into English as "to marry."

When learning this type of word, it is important to understand not only its literal meaning, but also its implied meaning beyond its literal meaning, that is, to understand the power relationship that exists in the unequal state of interpersonal relationships in Chinese society. This is a point that second language learners need to pay special attention to. For example, the English translation of "爱戴" is "to respect and support." Its literal meaning is "to love and support," but it also has the implied meaning of "respect, love, and support from subordinates, employees, or soldiers to their superiors, leaders, or commanders, which is often used in political and military contexts and is a positive meaning." If a learner mistakenly uses the English translation to form a sentence such as "妈妈爱戴我" (my mother loves me), it would be a big mistake.

Currently, there is no research on the acquisition of this type of words by international students. This has a great potential for pioneering research. In view of the fact that this type of words involves a major feature of Chinese social history and culture, that is, the Confucian culture's emphasis on hierarchy and etiquette has a great constraint and influence on the Chinese language and its use, we plan to use empirical methods to study the differences between Confucian cultural circle and non-Confucian cultural circle international students in the acquisition of power relationship words in Chinese. The issues to be examined include: 1) Are the two groups' levels of acquisition of this type of words lagging behind the levels of acquisition of ordinary words? 2) Is there a significant difference in the levels of acquisition of this type of words between the two groups? 3) Is there a significant difference in the levels of acquisition of this type of words within the internal categories of this type of words between the two groups?

RESEARCH METHOD

Paper-and-Pencil Test

Test Paper

We carefully designed a vocabulary test paper (see Appendix at the end of the paper), which was pilot-tested on a small scale and modified before it was finalized. It mainly consists of two parts: the first part is the vocabulary test, and the second part is the personal information.

The first part mainly examines international students' understanding of the selected 25 power relationship terms. These 25 terms are chosen from the vocabulary table of the "International Chinese Education Chinese Proficiency Level Standard", as shown in Table 1. The "Highly Advanced" refers to words that are beyond the table, but they belong to the 6th level of the new HSK vocabulary level outline (three grades and six levels), so they are also classified as Advanced. In selecting these 25 power relationship terms, we comprehensively considered their balanced distribution in terms of different levels (Intermediate and Advanced), different usage domains (administrative, family, education, etc.), and different directions (up and down). These words are presented in sentences with underline, each sentence is about 15 Chinese characters long, and the other words in the sentence are controlled at the intermediate level or below. Some of them are used correctly, while others are used incorrectly. International students are required to make judgments and choose correct or incorrect. If they think the usage is incorrect, they can further write the reason.

For example: 我们三兄弟都非常疼爱爸爸和妈妈。(We three brothers all love our father and mother very much.)　　　　　　　　　　　　A. true　　　B. false

Table 1. Distribution of Test Terms by Level

Level		Terms	Percentage
Intermediate or Lower	Lower Primary	报告 (repot), 派 (send), 亲切 (kind)	36%
	Intermediate	拜访 (visit), 出席 (attend), 反映 (report), 命令 (order), 慰问 (comfort), 指示 (instruct)	
Advanced	Advanced	表彰 (applaud), 慈祥 (kind), 叮嘱 (remind), 吩咐 (order), 抚养 (take care of), 告诫 (warn), 辜负 (let down), 过奖 (flatter), 和蔼 (gentle), 倾听 (listen), 孝顺 (filial piety)	64%

	Highly Advanced	爱戴 (admire), 安详 (peaceful), 勉励 (encourage), 请示(consult), 疼爱 (love)	

For the data of the vocabulary test, we used SPSS to analyze the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient, and obtained 0.822, which indicates that the reliability of the test is relatively high.

The second part collects personal information, including gender, nationality, HSK level, and class, in order to conduct differential analysis.

Participants

We selected international students with intermediate and advanced Chinese proficiency as participants. We conducted an in-class test, requiring them not to use a dictionary, to judge the correctness based on their actual situation, and to fill in the personal information truthfully within 15 minutes. We obtained a total of 52 valid test papers, with the following characteristics: 20 males (38.5%), 32 females (61.5%); 25 intermediate Chinese proficiency (48.1%), 27 advanced Chinese proficiency (51.9%). Their Chinese proficiency was mainly determined by their HSK level and the class they were in. They came from 12 countries. According to the division of human cultural circles by Fan Meng (1998) and Feng Tianyu (2004), we divided them into two categories: Confucian cultural circle and non-Confucian cultural circle, with the former accounting for 59.6% and the latter accounting for 40.4%. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2. Distribution of Participants by Country and Cultural Circle

Cultural Circle	Country (Sample Size)	Number	Percentage
Confucian Cultural Circle	Vietnam (17), Thailand (10), Indonesia (3), South Korea (1)	31	59.6%
Non-Confucian Cultural Circle	Belarus (2), Kazakhstan (7), Kyrgyzstan (5), Tajikistan (3), Uzbekistan (1), Congo (1), Czech Republic (1), Kenya (1)	21	40.4%

Statistical Analysis

First, we set up a numerical coding system for the test data: for the 25 vocabulary sentences, if the international student judges correctly, we assign 1 point, which is the full score, and if the judgment is wrong, we assign 0 points; for student personal information, we assign values by category. Then, we input the 52 valid test papers data one by one into the professional statistical software SPSS 19 for descriptive statistics, mean comparison, and independent sample t-test.

Descriptive statistics are mainly used to analyze the gender, nationality, HSK level, and cultural circle of international students who participated in the test. Mean comparison is used to analyze the mean scores and high-low comparison of different items and different subjects, and independent sample T test is used to analyze the differences between the two cultural circles of subjects.

Interview Method

Based on the statistical results of the test paper, we extracted 4 questions and interviewed 4 international students of different nationalities, with 2 from each of the two cultural circles. See Table 3 for details. The four questions are open-ended, and they are as follows: 1) Do you think these words are difficult? Why or why not? 2) Do you think social relationships, especially those between people of different ages, generations, statuses, and powers, are important in conversations? Why or why not? 3) Did you notice the influence of generations, statuses, and powers on the use of Chinese words when you were learning Chinese? 4) Does the use of generations, statuses, and powers affect the use of words in your native language? Please provide examples. After obtaining the students' consent, we recorded the interviews, transcribed them verbatim, and had the students confirm the accuracy.

Table 3. Interview Participants

Interviewee	Nationality	Gender	Chinese Proficiency Level	Cultural Circle
A	Vietnam	Female	Intermediate	Confucian Cultural Circle
B	Thailand	Female	Advanced	
C	Saudi Arabia	Male	Intermediate	Non-Confucian Cultural Circle
D	Azerbaijan	Male	Advanced	

For the interview data, we mainly used it to supplement the findings of the word test data analysis, and to explore the international students' perception of the difficulty of power relationship words and their metacognition in learning.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The learning levels of the two groups of students in power relationship words were generally poor.

The mean statistics show that the average score for Confucian cultural circle international students was 0.61, which is just barely passing. The average score for non-Confucian cultural circle international students was 0.48, which is less than half of the correct answers. The overall average score for both groups was 0.55, which is also below the passing level. See Table 4 for details. It can be seen that the learning levels of power relationship words for international students from both cultural circles, whether individually or overall, are not good, and do not

match their Chinese proficiency levels. Based on the Chinese proficiency levels of the 52 international students who participated in the test, 25 of them were at the intermediate level or above, with 27 at the advanced level or above. A comparison of their Chinese proficiency levels with their learning levels of power relationship words shows that their learning levels of power relationship words are behind their learning levels of ordinary words.

Table 4. Mean Learning Scores of International Students from the Two Cultural Circles

Cultural Circle	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Total Mean
Confucian Cultural Circle	31	0.61	0.12	0.55
Non-Confucian Cultural Circle	21	0.48	0.16	

There is a significant difference in the learning levels of power relationship words between the two groups.

Table 4 shows that the mean scores for Confucian cultural circle and non-Confucian cultural circle students were 0.61 and 0.48, respectively. The internal standard deviations for both groups were similar, with 0.12 for the former and 0.16 for the latter.

An independent sample t-test was conducted, with $T = 3.431$, $P = 0.001 < 0.01$. This indicates that the difference between the mean scores is highly significant. Combining the mean scores, it can be said that Confucian cultural circle students clearly outperform non-Confucian cultural circle students in the learning of power relationship words.

We divided power relationship words into two categories based on the vertical direction of social space, with the former representing actions and behaviors from the lower-power person to the higher-power person, such as "上交" (to hand over) and "敬奉" (to respect and serve), and the latter representing actions and behaviors from the higher-power person to the lower-power person, such as "命令" (to order) and "宠爱" (to spoil). The test paper contained 13 words in the former category, namely "安详" (serene), "拜访" (to visit), "报告" (to report), "出席" (to attend), "慈祥" (kindly), "反映" (to reflect), "辜负" (to fail to live up to), "过奖" (to flatter), "和蔼" (kind), "亲切" (cordial), "请示" (to ask for instructions), "孝顺" (filial piety), and "爱戴" (admiration). The test paper contained 12 words in the latter category, namely "表彰" (to commend), "叮嘱" (to remind), "吩咐" (to order), "告诫" (to warn), "抚养" (to raise), "派" (to send), "命令" (to order), "倾听" (to listen), "疼爱" (to love), "勉励" (to encourage), "慰问" (to comfort), and "指示" (to instruct).

In terms of the categories of power relationship words, the mean scores for Confucian cultural circle students were 0.65 and 0.56, respectively, while those for non-Confucian cultural

circle students were 0.52 and 0.43, respectively. The internal standard deviations for both groups were similar. See Table 5 for details.

Table 5.   Mean Learning Scores of Power Relationship Words in Different Directions for International Students from the Two Cultural Circles

Direction of Power Relationship Words	Cultural Circle	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation
Upward Power Relationship Words	Confucian Cultural Circle	31	0.65	0.13
	Non-Confucian Cultural Circle	21	0.52	0.16
Downward Power Relationship Words	Confucian Cultural Circle	31	0.56	0.15
	Non-Confucian Cultural Circle	21	0.43	0.19

As for the mean learning scores of upward power relationship words, an independent sample t-test was conducted, with $T = 3.114$, $P = 0.003 < 0.01$. This indicates that the difference between the mean scores is highly significant. Combining the mean scores, it can be said that international students from the Confucian cultural circle clearly outperform international students from the non-Confucian cultural circle in the learning of upward power relationship words.

As for the mean learning scores of downward power relationship words, an independent sample t-test was conducted, with $T = 2.869$, $P = 0.006 < 0.01$. This indicates that the difference between the mean scores is also highly significant. Combining the mean scores, it can be said that international students from the Confucian cultural circle also clearly outperform international students from the non-Confucian cultural circle in the learning of downward power relationship words.

There is a significant difference in the learning of power relationship words in the administrative and family domains between the two groups.

We divided power relationship words into three major domains: administrative, family, and educational, based on their pragmatic domains. The administrative domain has a large power distance and a strong impact. The family domain is characterized by generation and gender. The test paper contains 9, 8, and 8 power relationship words in the administrative, family, and educational domains, respectively.

The mean statistics show that international students from the Confucian cultural circle scored higher than those from the non-Confucian cultural circle in all three domains, but the difference in scores varied. The internal standard deviations of both groups are similar. See Table 6.

Table 6.   Mean Learning Scores of Power Relationship Words in Different Domains for International Students from the Two Cultural Circles

Pragmatic Domain	Cultural Circle	Sample Size	Mean	Standard Deviation
Administrative Domain	Confucian Cultural Circle	31	0.56	0.14
	Non-Confucian Cultural Circle	21	0.42	0.18
Family Domain	Confucian Cultural Circle	31	0.58	0.19
	Non-Confucian Cultural Circle	21	0.42	0.25
Educational and Other Domains	Confucian Cultural Circle	31	0.69	0.16
	Non-Confucian Cultural Circle	21	0.60	0.17

For the mean learning scores in the administrative domain, an independent sample t-test was conducted, with T = 3.070, P = 0.003 < 0.01. This indicates that the difference in mean scores is highly significant. Combining the mean scores, it can be said that international students from the Confucian cultural circle clearly outperform international students from the non-Confucian cultural circle in terms of learning power relationship words in the administrative domain.

For the mean learning scores in the family domain, an independent sample t-test was conducted, with T = 2.647, P = 0.011 < 0.05. This indicates that the difference in mean scores is significant. Combining the mean scores, it can be said that international students from the Confucian cultural circle also clearly outperform international students from the non-Confucian cultural circle in terms of learning power relationship words in the family domain.

For the mean learning scores in the educational domain, an independent sample t-test was conducted, with T = 1.896, P = 0.064 > 0.05. This indicates that the difference in mean scores is not significant.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In general, the learning level of power relationship words lags behind the learning level of ordinary words.

The test results show that international students from both cultural circles have a low level of mastery of power relationship words, which is behind the mastery of ordinary words. We believe this is related to the fact that power relationship words have a larger semantic load and require more learning involvement.

In general, power relationship words have a larger semantic load than ordinary words, which makes them more difficult to learn. For example, the words "拜见", "拜访", "拜谒", "看

望", "瞻仰", "接见", "视察", "考察", "审阅", and "批阅" all have the basic meaning of "to see". However, they also carry additional information about the social relationships between the people involved in the conversation, as well as the nuances of the event. The power relationship words in our test could be replaced with ordinary words with similar meanings, but the overall meaning of the sentence would be lost. For example, the sentence "2. Yesterday, we went to visit Teacher Wang" would lose the meaning of respect and politeness that the word "拜访" conveys.

It would also lose the cultural significance of "尊师重道" (respecting teachers).

Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) proposed the task-involvement load hypothesis, which states that vocabulary learning and memory storage are determined by the amount of effort and attention that a learner invests in a task. Tasks that require more effort and attention are more conducive to vocabulary learning and memory. In Chinese textbooks, the definitions of words are generally translated into English. When teachers are teaching, they rarely explicitly explain the differences between power relationship words and ordinary words with similar meanings in terms of additional meaning and usage. In addition, international students may not pay enough attention to these differences when they are learning. As a result, they may have difficulty learning power relationship words.

To understand the difficulty of power relationship words, we further interviewed 4 international students. 3 of them said they found it difficult, with the following comments: "It's difficult, I've learned some of them but forgotten them", "I haven't learned them, so I can only guess", and "It's a bit difficult, I haven't learned some of them". 1 of them said it was "not too difficult, but not easy either, it depends on your Chinese level, there are many advanced vocabulary words involved". It is clear that international students still find power relationship words to be relatively difficult. In addition, there is another possible reason why international students may find power relationship words difficult. This is because they may not always pay attention to the additional meaning of power relationships in Chinese words. Although they may understand the importance of power relationships in Chinese language and usage, they may not always be aware of how these relationships are reflected in words.

The researchers interviewed 4 international students to understand how they felt about power relationship words. When asked the question "Do you think social relationships, especially those between people of different ages, seniority, status, and power, are important in conversations?", 3 of the students said "yes" or "definitely very important". For example, Student B said, "You should be polite to your elders, use different words, and respect them." Student C said, "Talking to a teacher is different from talking to a classmate. You need to be careful when talking to someone who is older or has a higher status." Student D said, "You should not talk to someone who is older in the same way as you would talk to someone who is the same age as you. When you go to a government office, you need to speak standard Chinese. You need to express your respect and politeness to the officials because they have a higher status."

However, when asked the question "When you are learning Chinese words, do you pay attention to the influence of seniority, status, and power on word usage?", only 2 of the students

said "yes". The other 2 students said, "Sometimes I don't pay attention" and "I didn't pay attention because I am a foreigner." This suggests that international students may not be paying enough attention to the learning of power relationship words.

In general, international students from Confucian cultural circles have a higher level of mastery than international students from non-Confucian cultural circles.

The test results show that international students from Confucian cultural circles are better at learning power relationship words than international students from non-Confucian cultural circles. We believe that this is mainly due to the close cultural distance and positive transfer. That is, international students from Confucian cultural circles are more influenced by Confucian culture in terms of social culture than international students from non-Confucian cultural circles, and they are more likely to understand and learn power relationship words in Chinese.

East Asian and Southeast Asian countries are located in the vicinity of China and have historically belonged to the Confucian cultural circle. They have been widely and deeply influenced by Chinese culture, which is mainly based on Confucian thought. Nowadays, there are also many overseas Chinese in their countries, and the degree of Chinese fever is correspondingly higher. In other regions, including Europe, America, Oceania, Africa, West Asia, and South Asia, the influence of Confucian culture is relatively weak, even unattainable, regardless of history or the present.

In second language acquisition, language transfer plays a huge role. It covers multiple language levels, including phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Jiang Meng et al., 2013). International students from Confucian cultural circles are more likely to feel and understand the influence of power semantics on vocabulary and its use in terms of semantics and pragmatics than international students from non-Confucian cultural circles. As a result, their level of learning power relationship words is better.

In the interviews, all four students answered "yes" to the question "In your native language, do seniority, status, and power affect the use of words? Please provide examples." However, the Confucian cultural circle students A and B mentioned that these factors also have a significant impact on their languages. For example, Student A said, "In the languages of teachers and students, parents and children, and leaders and employees, there are many words that are used differently. For example, students report to teachers, and teachers notify students." Student B said, "There are many such words in our languages, and they are used often in both spoken and written language." The student from a Confucian cultural circle said, "In my country, we use very difficult and long words for the king." The students from non-Confucian cultural circles said that they emphasize politeness and respect. For example, the student from a non-Confucian cultural circle said, "In my country, we don't distinguish between 'you' and 'sir', we just use 'you'. However, there are many differences between men and women. For example, older people can make requests of younger people, but younger people cannot make requests of older people." Another student from a non-Confucian cultural circle said, "If someone's status is higher than mine, I will not casually joke with them. When talking to an elder, I cannot use 'you', I must use 'sir'. I must use 'sir' when talking to my father."

It is clear that politeness, the use of respectful words, and the use of power relationship words are all common in many languages around the world. However, the number of these words used can vary greatly. According to Hofstede's (1980) theory of five different cultural dimensions, the characteristics of Chinese culture on the mainland are a high power distance index, a high collectivism index, and a high masculinity index. In plain terms, this means that Chinese culture emphasizes power, collectivism, and masculinity. This cultural bias is a typical feature of Confucian culture. It has a profound impact on Chinese cognitive psychology and, in turn, affects the use of vocabulary in Chinese. The large number of power relationship words, including those used for superiors and those used for subordinates, is one of the important manifestations of this cultural bias in Chinese.

International students from the two cultural circles show different performance in the acquisition of power relationship words in different contexts.

The test results show that international students from Confucian cultural circles have a higher level of mastery of power relationship words in administrative and family contexts than international students from non-Confucian cultural circles. However, their levels of mastery of power relationship words in educational and other contexts are similar. We believe that this is mainly because power relationship words in Chinese are concentrated in administrative and family contexts, where they are very strong and prominent, but they are rare in educational and other contexts, where they are relatively weak.

According to the Modern Chinese Dictionary (5th edition), there are more than 300 verbs that clearly contain the meaning of power relationships between superiors and subordinates, or between elders and juniors, or between organizations and individuals. These verbs are mainly used in administrative and family contexts to express power actions and behaviors in these two major contexts. The distribution is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Distribution of Power Relationship Words in the Modern Chinese Dictionary

Distribution Domain	Examples	Quantity	Percentage
Administrative Domain	登基 (ascend the throne), 亲政 (take over the government), 视察 (, inspect), 犯上 (disobey), 报告 (report), 交纳 (pay)	250	83.3%
Family Domain	娇惯 (pamper), 溺爱 (spoil), 钟爱 (dote on), 顶撞 (contradict), 奉养 (support), 尽孝 (fulfill filial piety)	36	12%

Education and Other Domains	教授 (teach), 培训 (train), 施舍 (give alms), 忏悔 (confess), 祷告 (pray), 敬奉 (worship)	14	4.7%

Traditional Chinese society was a political society based on ethics. Under the concept of "family as the world," it combined morality and political power to achieve the unity of family and state. Feng Tianyu et al. (2005) and Zhang Dainian (2012) have both pointed out that traditional Chinese society has three major characteristics: first, the clan system based on blood ties is complete; second, feudal absolutism with the emperor as the core of power is strict; third, agricultural civilization with natural economy as the main body is developed. These three characteristics are all constrained by the ethical relations centered on the family, thus constructing a well-ordered and hierarchical ethical political society that conforms to the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" and "scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants." Liang Shuming (2011) proved that Chinese society is a "society based on ethics."

China is a "country of etiquette." Confucian culture emphasizes "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trust." It believes that "people of different social classes have different ranks, and people of different ages have different positions. The rich and the poor, the heavy and the light, all have their own positions." It particularly pursues "etiquette" and "subordination." This Confucian cultural value system, which emphasizes "ethics, hierarchy, subordination, and etiquette," has a great impact on the use and communication of Chinese, especially in vocabulary. Power relationship words are one of the important markers.

Cai Jinting et al. (2016) constructed a multidimensional dynamic theoretical framework for language transfer, arguing that language transfer occurs at three levels: concept, semantics, and form. Confucian cultural circle international students are more influenced by Confucian culture. When they acquire power relationship words, they are more likely to undergo positive transfer at the conceptual and semantic levels. Therefore, they are more likely to acquire power relationship words that are mainly manifested in family and administrative domains. Non-Confucian cultural circle international students are less influenced by Confucian culture. They are not familiar with the important influence of "hierarchy" and "subordination" on vocabulary in family and administrative domains in Confucian culture. They lack this positive transfer in acquisition, and therefore, they find it difficult to distinguish the unequal power represented by power relationship words.

SUMMARY AND TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Through the analysis of test data and interviews, it was confirmed that international students from the two cultural circles have the following characteristics in the acquisition of power relationship words: 1) Overall, their acquisition of these words lags behind their acquisition of ordinary words. 2) They have significant differences in their acquisition levels, with the former being better than the latter. 3) They have significant differences in their

acquisition of these words in administrative and family contexts, with the former being better than the latter, but no significant differences in educational and other contexts. Based on these research findings, we propose the following suggestions for the teaching of this type of vocabulary.

It is urgent to strengthen the teaching of this type of vocabulary, so that international students can understand the important influence of social power on the use of vocabulary.

Power relationship words carry the meaning of social power relationships, and are generally used between roles with unequal power. This type of word is relatively large in number in Chinese, with the vast majority being verbs. According to statistics, there are more than 300 such words in the Modern Chinese Dictionary, even more in ancient Chinese vocabulary, and nearly 200 in the Vocabulary List of the International Chinese Education Chinese Proficiency Level Standard.

Halliday (1978) views language as a social symbol. The language of social people is a set of behavioral resources that have been contextualized by society, that is, the "potential meaning" related to the use situation. Language has three meta-functions (Meta-function): conceptual, interpersonal, and textual. The interpersonal meta-function refers to the function of language to express the identity, status, attitude, motivation, and inference, judgment, and evaluation of the speaker (Hu Zhuanglin et al. 2009). In Chinese, there are many power relationship words, which, in addition to realizing the conceptual meta-function, also realize the interpersonal meta-function, highlighting interpersonal power relationships, "presenting social structures, and determining each person's status and role" (Halliday 2015).

Our research results show that international students from both cultural circles have poor overall performance in the acquisition of these words, which lags behind the acquisition of ordinary words. In addition, the number of these words is considerable, and the interpersonal function is important. Therefore, we need to strengthen the teaching of this type of vocabulary, so that international students can understand the contexts in which these words are used, the social power relationships between the roles involved in the use of these words, and the importance of respect and politeness in the use of these words. This will help to avoid errors such as "children raising their parents" and "teachers handing over homework to me."

In fact, understanding power relationships in Confucian culture is not difficult. The key is to understand the management role relationships in several major domains, such as politics, economy, education, family, and medicine, such as leaders and subordinates, bosses and employees, teachers and students, elders and juniors, and doctors and patients. When teaching these words, we should clearly explain to them the figures involved in the use of these words, their hierarchical, seniority, etc. relationships, and emphasize respect and courtesy, so that they can clearly use them. It is also important to let international students understand that, "In modern Chinese, words that can reflect hierarchical relationships are not for the sake of the hierarchical system or hierarchical concepts, but rather reflect the general principles of social interaction. In communication, people choose what words and expressions to use to show their communication

skills, and also to coordinate their respective communication purposes, self-image, and interpersonal relationships" (Zhao Yiling 2013).

It is necessary to strengthen the teaching of power relationship words to international students from non-Confucian cultural circles, with a focus on administrative and family domains.

Our research results show that there are significant differences in the acquisition of power relationship words between international students from Confucian and non-Confucian cultural circles, with the former performing significantly better than the latter. Additionally, there are significant differences in the acquisition of these words in administrative and family domains, with the former performing better than the latter. This suggests that it is necessary to strengthen the teaching of power relationship words to non-Confucian cultural circle students, with a focus on administrative and family domains.

Guo Xi (2006, 2007, 2009, 2010) has repeatedly emphasized that there are many differences between the teaching of Chinese language and culture to overseas Chinese and non-Chinese, emphasizing the uniqueness of Chinese language teaching and education. An Ran et al. (2006, 2007, 2008) have repeatedly analyzed the differences between Chinese and non-Chinese students in the aspects of Chinese character writing, syllable perception, and vocabulary extraction. This is actually an emphasis on the diversity of educational objects, which mainly manifests itself in cultural lineage, cultural identity, and cultural identity. Because the native language culture of non-Confucian cultural circle students is very different from the Chinese culture dominated by Confucian culture, they will have some learning difficulties and unique aspects in many aspects of Chinese, such as phonology, vocabulary, Chinese characters, grammar, pragmatics, semantics, and rhetoric, which will be different from Confucian cultural circle students. Power relationship words are closely related to the characteristics of Confucian culture. To learn and understand them well, it is necessary to deeply understand the cultural bias of Chinese society that emphasizes "power distance", emphasizes "respect and order", and pays attention to "etiquette". When interacting with European and American students, we often find that they rarely use the honorific "you" for teachers and elders, and they will say sentences like "Teacher, please send us the PPT" and "Thank you for your listening". This is mainly because they do not understand Chinese culture with a relatively large "power distance" enough. Therefore, students speaking to teachers in this way is a manifestation of "overstepping" in terms of power, breaking the normal power relationship between the two, and from a pragmatic point of view, it is a violation of the "Politeness Principle" (Leech 1983). For non-Confucian cultural circle students, it is even more important to emphasize this point, and let them pay attention to the correct use of power relationship words. This is the embodiment of deep vocabulary knowledge. Not only do you need to "know its form (oral and written), position (grammar sentence patterns, collocations) and meaning (concepts, associations)", but also "know its function (frequency, appropriateness)" (Nation 1990). It is precisely because power relationship words have a prominent and more expressive and practical functional feature in administrative and family domains, so it is necessary to strengthen the practice of these two major domains for non-Confucian cultural circle students, so that they understand: In formal occasions in

organizations and agencies such as the party, government, military, state-owned enterprises, schools, and hospitals, and in families, when it is necessary to emphasize the unequal power relationship, it is necessary to use power relationship words with directional distinction between superiors and subordinates. Otherwise, it will not only violate the principle of politeness, but also offend social power, which will cause language or even social conflict.

APPENDIX

Part 1: Chinese Word Usage Test

In each sentence, there are underlined words. If you think they are used appropriately, choose A. If you think they are used inappropriately, choose B. You can also write out the reason for your answer.

1.   The child sat peacefully (安详) on the sofa.   A. true   B. false

2.   Yesterday, we went to visit (拜访) Teacher Wang together.   A. true   B. false

3.   You should report (报告) the details of the matter to the leader.   A. true   B. false

4.   The students praised (表彰) the teacher's actions.   A. true   B. false

5.   Many students did not attend (出席) the New Year's Eve party yesterday.
                                                                                                            A. true   B. false

6.   A kind (慈祥) smile appeared on Grandma's face.   A. true   B. false

7.   I reminded (叮嘱) Mom to remember to bring me those new shoes tomorrow.
                                                                                                            A. true   B. false

8.   If any problems occur, please report (反映) them to the manager immediately.
                                                                                                            A. true   B. false

9.   My older brother ordered (吩咐) my father to return by the end of the month.
                                                                                                            A. true   B. false

10.   I warned (告诫) my boss: Don't bully my sister again.   A. true   B. false

11.   We must never let down (辜负) our parents' and teachers' expectations.
                                                                                                            A. true   B. false

12.   You're flattering (过奖) me. I only did what I was supposed to do.   A. true   B. false

13.   This young man is so kind (和蔼). He often helps others.   A. true   B. false

14.   When we grow up, we must take good care of (抚养) our parents.   A. true   B. false

15.   This time I came to China to study, it was sent (派) by the company.
                                                                                                            A. true   B. false

16.   The principal ordered (命令) that every student must wear the school uniform to school.
                                                                                                            A. true   B. false

17.   When the mayor arrived, the crowd immediately welcomed him and began to talk to him in a friendly (亲切) manner.   A. true   B. false

18.   After a student finished presenting his or her graduation thesis to the teacher, he or she said: "Thank you for listening (倾听), teachers."   A. true   B. false

19. This matter must be decided after <u>consulting</u> (请示) with the superior.

| | A. true | B. false |

20. All three of us brothers <u>love</u> (疼爱) our parents very much.   A. true   B. false

21. Sometimes, when my father encounters difficulties, I will <u>encourage</u> (勉励）him and cheer him on.

A. true   B. false

22. The boss was injured in a traffic accident and is now lying in the hospital. We all rushed over to <u>visit</u> (慰问) him.   A. true   B. false

23. As children, we must always <u>be filial to</u> (孝顺) our parents.   A. true   B. false

24. This young man is kind, has good skills, and is <u>well-liked</u> (爱戴) by everyone.

A. true   B. false

25. I <u>instructed</u> (指示）the company manager how to operate this machine.

A. true   B. false

Part 2: Personal Information

1. Your gender is   ①Male   ②Female
2. Your country is (   )
3. Your Chinese level is HSK (   ) level
4. Your class is (   )

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