Desiderata for a Basic Chinese Language Textbook[1]

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As part of a long-term project to develop new training materials for foreign students of Chinese, I have for some time been compiling a list of what I believe to be desirable characteristics of a basic Chinese language textbook. In the spirit of the Chinese aphorism *pāo zhuān yǐn yù*, I now cast out my ideas in hopes of attracting comments and corrections.

General Considerations

1. Intended User – The first thing which anyone setting out to write a new beginning Chinese language text needs to be clear about is who the intended users of the materials are. What is their age? What is their native language? What is their reason for learning Chinese? It is obvious that elementary or junior high school children will need to be motivated in different ways than university students or professional people. Also, learners will have different needs depending on their native language and culture. On account of their widely disparate linguistic and cultural background, native speakers of German and Japanese, for example, would have very different needs in learning Chinese and would ideally not learn out of the same textbook or in the same class.

2. Course Objectives – The textbook writers also must think carefully about realistic objectives for their textbook in each of the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. What specific linguistic skills – such as ordering food in a restaurant or making sense of a train schedule – are students to possess by the end of the course? The skill level descriptions developed by the U.S. government's Interagency Language Roundtable and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages are valuable resources for developing lists of specific skill objectives.

Depending on users' particular needs, it is conceivable that a textbook might treat only certain skills, for instance, speaking and listening but not reading and writing; or speaking, listening and reading but not writing. In any case, the course objectives for the four skills will probably not all be at the same level since some skills, such as reading and – especially – writing, take longer to develop than others; and since most foreign students of Chinese will, in actual practice, require certain skills more than others.

3. Course Content – Emphasis should be on the practical. Material should be introduced that has the highest and most immediate pay-off value possible. Accordingly, lessons should be arranged in order of their general usefulness and practical importance. If this approach is followed, then students with time for only the first five or ten lessons will at least be exposed to the most useful grammar and vocabulary.

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[1]This article is a revision of a paper I presented at the First International Conference of Chinese Linguistics held at the National University of Singapore from June 24-26, 1992. I should acknowledge here my indebtedness to my teacher of Japanese, Eleanor H. Jorden, and my colleague in the field of Chinese pedalinguistics, A. Ronald Walton, for a number of the ideas contained in this paper. I also wish to express my deepest respect to the authors of previous Chinese language textbooks, many of which have had a strong influence on the development of my own ideas about teaching Chinese. I alone, of course, must take responsibility for the particular approach described in this paper.

The grammar and vocabulary introduced for both speaking and reading should be selected based on frequency of occurrence. In this regard, the *Xiàndài Hànyǔ Pínlǜ Cídiǎn* published by Beijing Language Institute is a most useful reference.

Sexual and racial biases should be avoided. The non-native participants in the basic dialogs, for instance, should include substantial numbers of women and minorities – including especially Chinese-Americans, who now constitute a very sizeable percentage of first-year Chinese language enrollments in the U.S.

4. Methodology – Language learning is so complex an undertaking and human personalities are so different that, in my view, no single method of language teaching can meet the needs of all learners (or all teachers) at all times. Hence, I am a believer in carefully considered eclecticism and redundancy of approach.

In spite of the bad press it has received in the last two decades, the audio-lingual approach, I feel, still has much to recommend itself. Memorization of basic dialogs combined with generous amounts of drill are, from my experience, the most efficient way for most students to internalize samples of the language so as to master its grammatical structure and develop fluency.

Of course, memorization and drill should by no means become ends in themselves and must be followed by even larger doses of meticulously crafted communicative practice. Exercises of all kinds are needed for effective language learning, there being many useful insights to be obtained from the communicative, functional-notional, grammar-translation, and other approaches.

5. Flexibility of Use – Maximum flexibility of use is, in general, to be desired. Student and teacher needs and personalities vary widely, as do the types of programs in which Chinese is taught. Although there are a number of basic issues on which textbook writers cannot avoid taking a stand, they should try to anticipate the varied needs of the users of their materials and leave options open wherever possible.

Examples of some issues where options might best be left open to the users: (1) how to teach pronunciation (begin with a week of intensive pronunciation practice or start immediately but slowly with dialogs, teaching pronunciation through them?); (2) whether to teach speaking and listening only (via Pinyin) or also to teach reading, or also writing; (3) when to begin the study of Chinese characters (after a lag of several weeks or on day one?); and (4) whether to teach simplified or traditional characters. While it is entirely appropriate for textbook writers to give their recommendations concerning these questions, they should accept the fact that there are bound to be differences of opinion and include sufficient materials so that users with different views will be able to find enough materials to satisfy their needs.

6. Naturalness of Language – A special effort needs to be made to present natural, idiomatic, and up-to-date Chinese as opposed to stilted "textbook" style. In the preparation of basic dialogs, special attention needs to be paid to interjections and particles, which are underrepresented in most Chinese language texts currently available.

7. Authenticity of Language – Since 1949, China has been a politically divided country. Although linguistic differences among mainland China, Taiwan, and the other Chinese-speaking areas are sometimes exaggerated, it is a fact that the different political and social systems are reflected to a certain extent in the language that people use. Geographical and dialectal factors, of course, also play an important role. For example, in many ways the Mandarin of mainland southern China is closer to Taiwan Mandarin than it is to Beijing Mandarin.

Although the emphasis of a beginnning text should be on the core that is common to Mandarin Chinese wherever it is spoken, linguistic differences and recent innovations should be pointed out where appropriate. In my view, true "proficiency in Chinese" requires familiarity with both mainland China and Taiwan usages. Consequently, material from both sides of the Taiwan Straits should be represented. While the majority of lessons should take place in mainland China, a substantial minority should be set in Taiwan, and consideration should be given to including other areas such as Hong Kong and Singapore.

Terms that are restricted in use to a certain speech area must be so indicated. Great care must be taken that the language for a particular dialog or reading selection is authentic to the locale. This applies as much to the textbook itself as to accompanying videotapes and audiotapes (e.g., a dialog set in Taipei should be videotaped in Taipei, and the audiotape for a dialog that takes place in Beijing should be recorded by natives of Beijing).

8. Attention to Sociolinguistic and Cultural Features – Attention to sociolinguistic and cultural features is essential, since proficiency in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary alone is insufficient for effective intercultural communication. Besides being able to form grammatically correct sentences, learners must know when to use them and how to adjust them for the occasion (e.g., make them more or less formal or convey nuances). Rather than a separate section in each lesson on "culture", cultural information should be taught via the four skills (e.g., as part of representative dialogs and reading selections).

Special instruction on participation in Chinese culture by the non-native should be provided, since the non-native's situation will inevitably differ in many ways from that of the native. This is one reason why it is important that both natives and non-natives participate in the writing of the textbook. Only a native will have perfect linguistic control and be an authentic cultural model for students, but only a non-native with advanced proficiency in the language and extensive in-country residence will know what it is like to function as a foreigner in Chinese culture.

9. Organization – While reading should be carefully coordinated with speaking, it is best taught separately. There are four reasons for dividing the textbook into separate speaking/comprehension and reading/writing components: (1) Due to the nature and complexity of Chinese orthography, learning how to read and write is in many respects quite different from learning how to speak and comprehend and requires different techniques to be learned effectively. (2) Standard written Chinese involves significantly different linguistic content than spoken Chinese, some of the most common spoken words seldom being written (the particle *a*, for example, or the words *zhuōzi* and *yǐzi*) and some of the most common written characters and written grammar constructions (such as *yǔ* 'and' and *wéi...suǒ* 'to be...by') rarely being spoken. (3) By designing separate tracks for speaking/comprehension and reading/writing, we can offer maximum flexibility to users, who can take up speaking/comprehension only or begin reading and writing at whatever point seems appropriate for them. (4) The sheer volume of materials required for a comprehensive basic course that includes speaking/comprehension and reading/writing components will in any case necessitate more than a single volume.

The textbook should be organized into a series of short, discreet segments, for each of which clear learning goals have been established against which students are evaluated at the conclusion of the segment. By dividing large tasks into many small ones, the task of learning Chinese becomes more manageable. For this reason, it is best if each lesson has only one basic dialog or reading selection and if the vocabulary lists are kept short.

An added bonus to this approach is the sense of accomplishment students attain through frequent completion of small goals, rather than getting bogged down in lessons that are seemingly never-ending.

The number of new grammatical patterns and new vocabulary items in each lesson must be carefully controlled. Certainly, there is a place for authentic, uncontrolled materials; even during the first year, students should be exposed to such materials periodically. However, my own experience leads me to the conviction that spending excessive time on authentic materials at the beginning stages of instruction is frustrating for many students (there is a minority who can cope) and is not the most efficient way to build solid foundations.

In teaching grammar, a spiraling approach should be adopted, where the basics of a construction are introduced and practiced in one lesson, variations added a few lessons later, and more advanced related usages presented several lessons after that. Before each new grammatical installment, material introduced previously should be carefully summarized and reviewed. To avoid the problem of cross-association, it is best to avoid introducing two or more similar but potentially confusing structures simultaneously. Instead, one should be presented first, with the other(s) held back for a few lessons. At that point, the second structure can be introduced and the similarities and differences between the first and second structure confronted. In the case of variant usages, common variants should be identified and practiced for comprehension but only one variant taught for active use.

In organizing and writing the course, the textbook writers should consider carefully what kinds of activities can be conducted by the student outside of class and which must be conducted in class. By having students conduct certain activities on their own (such as viewing videotapes, listening to audiotapes, memorizing dialogs, doing taped drills, reading grammar notes and cultural explanations, memorizing characters, and reading texts), valuable class time can be saved for communicative practice.

10. Exercises – Copious exercise materials, especially those that encourage students to use the language creatively, should be provided. As many of the exercises as possible should involve application of the students' newly acquired linguistic skills to the solving of problems non-natives might typically encounter in Chinese society. In preparing exercise material, the motto should be "better too much than too little". Some of the exercises can be required of all students while others can be designated as optional for students and teachers to choose from depending on their needs. While most of the exercises will be designed to be done in class, some can be recorded by the students out of class to hand in at the next class session.

As many of the exercises as possible should be designed for use in conjunction with charts, tables, maps, realia, and props of all kinds. For maximum efficiency, such materials should be designed for multiple uses. For example, in the student orientation section (see below) there could be a map, in English and Chinese, of the Chinese provinces and major dialects together with numbers of speakers. The same map could be reused several lessons later for practice in locating places (*"Guǎngxī shěng zài Zhōngguóde nǎibianr?"*), several lessons after that for practice with large numbers (*"Yǒu duōshǎo rén huì shuō Guǎngdōng huà?"*), and once again when drilling comparative expressions (*"Hǎinán shěng bǐ Táiwān shěng dà ma?"*).

11. Review – In order to promote long-term retention of the material presented, the textbook should be designed so that each new structure and each new vocabulary item reoccurs at periodic intervals (say, at least once every five lessons) after it has first been introduced. In these days of inexpensive computer technology, it is a relatively simple matter to maintain records of where in a text given linguistic forms have occurred.

In addition to systematic integration of previous grammar and vocabulary into new lessons, comprehensive review lessons should be prepared after every few lessons for those users needing them.

12. Aesthetic Appeal – For optimal learning to take place, aesthetic factors such as the composition and lay-out of the copy as well as inclusion of carefully designed maps, diagrams, and other illustrative material cannot be neglected.

If possible, each lesson should include a color or black and white photograph of a Chinese scene relating to the topic of the lesson. Photographs should be carefully chosen for detail and cultural content and should help explain the cultural context of the lesson. They should lend themselves to being "conversation starters" both in the given lesson and later, for purposes of review and consolidation.

While budget will inevitably be a limiting factor, the impact of visuals on student motivation and learning efficiency must not be underestimated.

Student Orientation

The textbook should begin with a carefully designed orientation to the study of Chinese. The orientation section, which can be crucial in determining language learning success, should include a succinct overview of the language with information on some of the special characteristics of Chinese. Such information can be useful both to correct possible misconceptions and to heighten interest and motivation.

Next, there should be a discussion of course goals and objectives, since students learn best if they know where they are going and why. It is important that students have realistic expectations concerning what they will be able to accomplish in the various skills by the conclusion of the course. Learners need to know why Chinese is considered a difficult language. However, while being candid with our students about the challenges they face, we must also communicate to them the learnability of Chinese and the many fascinating aspects of studying this language.

Explanation should be provided in the orientation concerning some of the basic principles of language learning. The nature of writing and the primacy of spoken language over written language, for example, are commonly misunderstood and have clear implications for the study of a language such as Chinese. The orientation should also distinguish between what applied linguists term language learning (e.g., conscious learning of grammar rules and cultural information) as opposed to language acquisition (i.e., out-of-awareness acquisition of language that comes through practice in language use) and explain why adults learning a foreign language require some of each.

Most important of all for the student orientation section is a discussion of learning strategies. We want our students not only to work hard but to work smart! Students must be taught an approach to learning that will enable them to learn as efficiently as possible and even to become self-sufficient language learners who are able to continue their learning on their own upon completion of the course. Students need detailed instruction in what and how to prepare for class, how to work with videotapes and audiotapes, how to study characters, and how to go about reading a text for the first time.

The orientation should also include a chapter on pronunciation with explicit information on how to articulate the sounds of Mandarin. While some students may be able to master pronunciation through imitation alone, there are other students for whom detailed information on how to produce the various sounds can be very helpful.

Speaking

1. Basic Dialogs – The core of each lesson should be a basic dialog. The purpose of the basic dialogs is to introduce high-frequency grammatical structures, vocabulary, and cultural information in a situation-oriented format which is relevant to students' likely future needs. Working at home with audiotapes and textbook, the student memorizes one dialog each day to be role-played in class the next day with the instructor and the other students in class.

The dialogs should be natural and realistic but short enough to be easily memorizable. It is important that not too much new vocabulary be contained in each lesson. Four to ten lines of dialog is about right, introducing one or at most two new major grammatical constructions and ten to twenty new vocabulary items. The temptation to make too many of the dialogs humorous or witty should be resisted, since the fact is that much of the stuff of daily conversation is actually quite banal in content.

Each of the basic dialogs should in principle consist of a conversation between one foreigner and one (or occasionally more than one) Chinese, since this is the situation in which foreign learners of Chinese will normally find themselves.[2] The sociolinguistic context of each dialog must be carefully described: Who are the speakers? What is their age, sex, and relationship? Where is the dialog taking place?

Regarding content, the textbook writers should include the most common daily life situations faced by *foreigners* in China, such as introductions, transportation, shopping, eating and drinking, visiting people, telephoning, talking about one's work, and emergencies such as illnesses and accidents. While the earlier lessons will mostly deal with situations, the later lessons should introduce common functions such as invitations, requests, refusals, offers, acceptances, compliments, apologies, complaints, and criticism.

Also important are what my former colleague at the Foreign Service Institute, Doug Jones, has called "communication management devices" – that is, locutions for confirming speakers' meaning, for changing the topic of conversation, for executing artful dodges and polished escapes, etc. Finally, there should be some material that will provide students with the vocabulary and grammar they need to develop and nurture interpersonal relationships with Chinese people, since it is use of the Chinese language in such relationships that helps students grow in developing their proficiency.

In drafting the basic dialogs, it is important to achieve balance in these areas: (1) informal situations (such as chatting with Chinese roommates in a college dorm) vs. more formal situations (such as paying a call on the head of a firm or attending a dinner banquet); (2) male vs. female roles (which should be roughly equal in number and have appropriate language to match); (3) PRC vs. Taiwan usage; and (4) discussion of topics relating to China vs. discussion of topics relating to the foreign country. With regard to the last point, I would note that in the past, most Chinese textbooks have emphasized providing students with the grammar and vocabulary to discuss Chinese culture, and yet a more typical situation for foreign students when in China is to be asked to discuss the situation in their home countries.

Finally, it is desirable that the basic dialogs be created (and, later, that the Chinese-language portions of the textbook be checked) by more than a single native speaker. This is because in Chinese, as in all languages, every speaker has his or her own favored grammatical constructions and vocabulary. By exposing our students to the language of several different native speakers, we can better prepare them for the variety of usages they will encounter in China.

[2]Additional conversations between native speakers only can be included in the listening comprehension component.

2. Supplementary Vocabulary – In addition to the new vocabulary introduced in the dialogs, some of the lessons may introduce selected supplementary vocabulary. This might be done, for example, if there were a high-frequency vocabulary item which could not be worked into the basic dialog but which is related in some way to the dialog and which would increase possibilities for drills and exercises or generally enrich students' speech.

All supplementary vocabulary should be given in context (at the minimum, in an example sentence). Listing related items together in groups can be a useful strategy for language learning. Examples of such groups would be: countries, parts of the body, animals, kinship terms, colors, adverbs of frequency, etc.

Some of the supplementary vocabulary may be indicated as required and be built into the rest of the text while other items may be marked as optional and not repeated in any systematic way. The classroom instructor will need constantly to monitor students' mastery of the much more vital grammatical patterns as he or she considers which of the supplementary vocabulary items to introduce.

3. Notes – While drill and use are the key ingredients in learning a foreign language, an appropriate amount of explanation and analysis can render the learning process more efficient for most adult learners. Consequently, each lesson in the speaking/comprehension text should include a section containing notes on the material in the basic dialogs.

The notes, which should be written in the native language of the students, should explain and exemplify new grammatical patterns and vocabulary as well as pertinent sociolinguistic and cultural information. Whenever possible, new material should be explained in terms of familiar material, which should first be reviewed for the student. Where appropriate, Chinese and native language usage can be contrasted to highlight similarities and differences.

4. Drills – To achieve fluency and automaticity, most students require a large amount of drill work. While some drill can be conducted by the instructor in class, the majority should be done by the student out of class, working with audiotapes, so as to free up classroom time for communicative activities.

The drill section of the textbook should contain a large variety of drills including repetition drills, substitution drills, expansion drills, transformation drills, combination drills, level drills, translation drills, and interactive drills to which the student must respond based on a stimulus on the tape or in the workbook. As many drills as possible should be part of a communicatively realistic exchange between two speakers, rather than being merely single phrases or sentences out of context.

5. Exercises – The exercises are what all of the preceding has been leading up to. They are the test of whether or not the student has really mastered the material. The kinds of exercises that can be included in the speaking/comprehension textbook are questions on the dialogs, general questions, English-Chinese translation, and communicative activities.

For true communication to take place, the hearer must not know in advance what the speaker will say – there must exist an information gap. Thus, for many of the communicative activities, two sets of exercises will need to be prepared, each of which

provides some information but withholds other information about which the student must ask.

Starting in the second half of the course, one exercise that can be very useful is dialog narration, that is, having individual students recount the events of earlier dialogs. This is both good review of past material and useful practice in extended narration – a skill quite different from answering a question with a short phrase or sentence.

6. Supplements – To enrich the student's knowledge of Chinese language and culture and to serve as a change of pace, supplements may be included for some of the lessons. Examples of topics that might be covered are songs, games, tongue twisters, and an introduction to the major dialects of Chinese.

Listening

Many textbook writers and teachers assume that only speaking needs to be taught and that listening comprehension will be "picked up" automatically through training in speaking. Actually, the most efficient way to train students in listening comprehension – which is certainly a most useful skill for students studying a foreign language to acquire – is by designing part of the training specifically for listening comprehension.

A substantial aural comprehension component consisting of tasks for students to complete based on accompanying tape recordings should be included with the textbook. The recordings should include a variety of voices and, in the later lessons, present samples of accented Mandarin speech so as to familiarize students with some of the more common variations in pronunciation they are likely to encounter such as Shandong Mandarin, Shanghai Mandarin, and Taiwan Mandarin. While we ordinarily would not want our students to speak with regional accents, they should receive training in comprehending such speech, since the majority of the Chinese population does not speak standard Mandarin.

Some of the comprehension passages should be specially written based on the grammar and vocabulary to which students have been exposed. Their purpose is to present the vocabulary and structures of the current lesson in new contexts as well as to review previous material. The textbook writers should prepare detailed comprehension questions, some in English and some in Chinese, for students to answer out of class as a check to make sure they have listened to the material. The scripts of the listening comprehension sections should *not* be available to students.

Beginning in the second half of the textbook, there is also need for some comprehension passages composed of authentic material. Unlike the controlled comprehension passages, the authentic comprehension passages are samples of genuine, unedited language as actually used by Chinese for Chinese. Sources may include television and radio as well as recordings of conversations, speeches, and announcements.

Obviously, in selecting such material, consideration should be given to what students already know, and vocabulary items that are crucial to the passage may be annotated. However, it is to the learners' benefit if there are some words and structures which are not familiar. Although it is in most cases not possible to give more than snippets of authentic material – since it is extremely difficult to find material that is suitable in content and level, it is important for students to be exposed to genuine language from time to time so that they receive practice in making sense out of unfamiliar material, a skill they will need for the rest of their Chinese language learning and using career. Moreover, it has been my experience that occasional work with such materials can evoke considerable student interest and, when undertaken properly, can serve as a real "confidence builder."

Reading

1. Presentation of New Characters – One of the secrets to success in learning Chinese characters is small, regular doses, not overkill. For courses that meet one hour per day, requiring students to learn five to six characters per night and not more than about ten compounds is about right.

For the most efficient learning, students should be provided with full information on the structure of individual characters. This should include simplified and traditional forms of the character, Pinyin romanization, translation, radical, phonetic, character analysis, etymology, contrast with similar-looking characters, and stroke order.

Characters to be presented should be chosen based on these criteria: (1) frequency of occurrence in written Chinese according to frequency counts; (2) order of introduction in corresponding spoken materials, so that to the degree possible the words represented by the new characters are already known; (3) consideration of which phonetics students have already encountered; (4) number of strokes and difficulty in writing of the character.

Regarding the question of which type of characters – simplified characters or traditional characters – should be taught, it is my firm conviction that reading proficiency in Chinese at this point in time implies familiarity with both systems. At the same time, I feel we should respect the individual needs and preferences of the user. Hence, I believe that a beginning reading text should be designed with parallel texts in both systems.

Such an approach will allow a total of five options for using the materials: (1) first traditional then simplified; (2) first simplified then traditional; (3) simplified and traditional simultaneously; (4) simplified characters only; and (5) traditional characters only. An additional advantage of parallel texts is potential economy in teaching, i.e., if necessary, two or more students with limited time and different needs (say, a future diplomat going to Beijing and a future banker going to Taipei) could study together in the same class, taught by the same instructor.

2. Reading Selections – Much less important than the number of individual characters students have memorized is what they are able to do with those characters. Copious reading selections are necessary so that students will be exposed to large enough a corpus of texts that they may begin to develop reading fluency.

The reading selections should in principle be written in standard written register (*shūmiànyǔ*), not written spoken register (*kǒutóuyǔ*). The selections should be presented in both horizontal and vertical formats as well as in a variety of type fonts and handwriting styles. To the extent possible, the reading selections should be infused with Chinese culture. Some of the selections might be based, for example, on the biographies of famous Chinese people or stories from ancient and modern history.

While the bulk of the language of each reading selection should be written in characters, essential words the characters for which have not yet been introduced may be written in Pinyin. There is some validity in such an approach, since even in texts for natives, difficult characters – say, the names of items in a museum collection – are occasionally indicated in Pinyin (mainland China) or in the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (Taiwan). Occasional use of Pinyin interspersed with characters allows for more interesting reading selections and helps avoid having to introduce lower-frequency

characters. However, such mixture of writing systems should not be overdone and should gradually be reduced by the middle or last third of the text.

3. Exercises – Besides the reading selections, students need exercises of all kinds to give them the practice they need to become proficient readers. Character discrimination exercises can be devised to train students in distinguishing between similar-looking characters.[3] Sentence parsing exercises are also useful (e.g., does the character 确 *què* in the series 的确实 combine with the character preceding it or with the character following it?).

Another useful type of exercise is conversion drills, where students convert written register to spoken register and vice versa. Other possible exercises include transcription (characters into Pinyin and vice versa), translation (English to Chinese and vice versa), and word-building exercises (e.g., the various combinations and differences in meaning of the characters *gǎi*, *biàn*, and *huàn*). In addition to exercises involving the traditional activities of close reading and translation, there should also be exercises on other reading-related activities such as skimming and gisting.

4. Notes – The notes should analyze the grammar and vocabulary of the written language and provide other needed explanations. This should include explicit instruction in strategies for reading Chinese, e.g., "if a newspaper headline doesn't make sense, try reading the first few sentences of the article".

5. Authentic Materials – Before the end of the first year of instruction, students need to be exposed to a modicum of authentic written materials. These could include simple notes and short selections from newspapers and magazines as well as realia such as currency, tickets, cartoons, signs, menus, schedules, maps, name cards, and advertisements. If authentic materials are introduced in small doses fairly early on (as early as, say, after the first third of the course), they will not seem so intimidating later.

It should be made clear to students that in working with authentic materials, the main objective is developing strategies for discovering the general meaning of unfamiliar material, and that they need not concern themselves with learning the meaning of every word in the selection.

6. Supplements – For enrichment and variety, students can be introduced to special topics related to reading such as the principles for character simplification; alternate forms of characters; how to use Chinese dictionaries; the basics of cursive script; introduction to Chinese calligraphy; a Chinese poem or two; introduction to newspaper Chinese; and introduction to Classical Chinese.

Writing

Full proficiency in Chinese, of course, includes the ability to write. There is no doubt that writing is a useful skill for a foreign learner of the language to possess. However, assuming that the amount of time we have available to train our students is limited and that we want to help them attain the highest proficiency possible in the skills they need most, then we need to keep in mind these facts about writing: (1) writing is dependent

[3] I remember once when visiting Fuzhou seeing a sign in a hotel restaurant which I first read rather hurriedly as *Cāntīng lóushàng méiyǒu kāfēishì* 'The restaurant does not have a coffee shop upstairs'. Only on a second reading did I realize that what I thought had been written 没有 *méiyǒu* was actually 设有 *shèyǒu*, resulting in the opposite meaning 'The restaurant has a coffee shop upstairs'!

on the other three skills of speaking, listening, and reading; (2) for Western students learning Chinese, writing is the most difficult of the four skills to acquire, i.e., it takes the longest time; and (3) for the majority of our students, writing will be the least used of the four skills.

Given these facts, I feel that during the initial stage of instruction, at least, writing should be taken up last and most lightly. Reading, a much more crucial skill for non-natives, should be stressed over writing. While it is true that many students enjoy writing Chinese and that practice in writing can be of value in strengthening character recognition skills in reading, it cannot be denied that the more time students spend on writing, the slower their progress in the other skills.

In teaching writing, it is important to distinguish between orthography – being able to write characters – and composition. Practical skills such as filling out common forms, taking telephone messages, and writing simple notes and letters may be taught and practiced. Transcription of audiotapes into characters and cloze techniques (i.e., filling in blanks in texts) can be useful exercises. The student should progress from writing in phrases and sentences to writing in paragraphs and longer units. Asking students to compose essays on abstract topics would seem to have little value except at the most advanced stages.

Supplementary Materials

The textbook should be accompanied by a full range of supplementary materials designed to enhance students' learning of the material as well as to facilitate use of the material by the instructor.

For the speaking/comprehension series, there should be included: student workbook, character version of text (for instructor, those students who already read Chinese but in another dialect, or more advanced students who wish to learn colloquial characters), charts for classroom use (e.g., oral tract, city plans of Beijing and Taipei), situation cards, videotape series, audiotape series, and audiotape scripts.

For the reading/writing series, there should be included: student workbook (with perforated character practice and exercise sheets to be handed in by students), classroom charts, character cards for the instructor's use, character flashcards for students' use, and audiotape series.

In addition, for both series there should be comprehensive teacher's manuals in Chinese and English. The manuals should contain general guidance on planning and delivering the course, specific suggestions for teaching each lesson, questions and exercises for each lesson, quizzes and tests for the use of the instructor, and information on how to make or where to purchase props to be used during teaching (such as toy fruit and vegetables to practice shopping, toy cars for practicing directions, dice for practicing numbers, etc.).

In this day and age of sophisticated and relatively inexpensive videotape technology, there is no longer an excuse for a language textbook that is not accompanied by an extensive videotape series. The videotapes should be carefully filmed to present dramatizations of the basic dialogs showing the cultural context in which they occur. Well prepared videotapes can do much to improve students' understanding of the material and strengthen interest and motivation.

As important as videotapes are, audiotapes must not be neglected. These should be carefully designed to assist students in mastering the basic dialogs, grammar, and vocabulary outside the classroom as part of class preparation. The recordings should always aim for normal speed and should, after about the first half of the course, feature

as many different voices as possible: male, female, older, younger and, as was mentioned earlier, speakers with moderate regional accents representing the various provinces of China. It is crucial that the audiotapes possess the highest fidelity possible. Judicious use of sound effects will make the material more realistic and enjoyable for students.

摘要

本文旨在讨论一本理想的初级程度华语教材应具备哪些特点。

有关句型及词汇，应按其在现代汉语中的使用频率而遴选之。至于采用哪种教学法理论，著者认为由于每位学员的情况不同，故不宜限制得过分狭窄，但课本中包括的不同练习应多多益善，且应特别注意对中国社会及文化方面的介绍，指导学员如何以外国人的身分参与中国社会。此外一定要详尽地指导学员学习中文的方法及步骤。

由于中文口头语及书面语的不同，应把课本分为会话及阅读两种。会话课本是借许多较短的基本对话，介绍在汉语中常用的句型及词汇。每个对话应以外国人在中国经常碰到的某一种情况为主题。对话中的角色原则上应是一个外国人和一个中国人。会话课本里应包括各种不同的练习，像听力练习就是其中之一。

阅读课本应以书面语为主，介绍部首、音符、易混淆的字，以及各种字体如手写体、宋体、楷体与繁体。除句子及短文外，也应包括一部份实际阅读材料如剪报、广告、路标等等。

另外，应准备各种补充教材如学员用练习簿、教师手册、图表、道具、录象带以及录音带。

NACHRICHTEN

***** Zweite Tagung zum Chinesischunterricht an Gymnasien in Rheinland-Pfalz**

Nach einer ersten Tagung im September 1989 (Die Dokumentation hierzu ist noch kostenlos beim Fachverband Chinesisch erhältlich!) fand am 9.3.92 eine weitere Tagung mit dem Thema „Chinesisch: Lerninhalte und Lernziele" am Staatlichen Institut für Lehrerfort- und -weiterbildung (SIL) in Speyer statt, das von diesem zusammen mit dem Fachverband Chinesisch organisiert wurde. Sieben Referate zu Lernzielen und Lerninhalten sowie zur Fortbildung von Chinesischlehrern an Gymnasien – ein wichtiger Schwerpunkt, der sich erst kurz vor und während der Tagung ergab – standen auf dem Programm. Unter den 14 Teilnehmer aus Rheinland-Pfalz und anderen Bundesländern befand sich auch Dr. J. Pleines, der neue Leiter des Landesspracheninstituts Nordrhein-Westfalen in Bochum, das aus den Teilinstituten Russicum, Sinicum, Japonicum und Arabicum besteht. Dr. Pleines stellte das Sinicum und die geplanten neuen Aufgaben des Sinicum vor. Er machte das Angebot eines Fortbildungskurses am Sinicum im Sommer 1993 für Chinesischlehrer an Gymnasien (Einzelheiten hierzu s.u.). Im Anschluß an die Tagung wurde eine Umfrage unter Lehrern an allen bekannten deutschen Gymnasien mit Chinesisch bezüglich des Fortbildungsbedarfs und des eventuellen Interesses an einem derartigen Kurs durchgeführt. Die erfreuliche Resonanz und die Anzahl der Teilnahmezusagen zeigen, daß Fortbildungsmaßnahmen in diesem Bereich, die es bisher noch nicht gibt, dringend sind.

***** Dolmetscher-Symposium in Bornheim**

Vom 16. bis 20.3.92 fand in Bornheim bei Bonn das Symposium „Konzeption einer zukünftigen Qualifizierung deutschsprachiger Dolmetscher für Chinesisch" statt. Es wurde von der VW-Stiftung gefördert und stand unter der Schirmherrschaft von Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Kubin (Universität Bonn). Die Organisation übernahmen Maria Koch (Bornheim) und Petra Müller (Germersheim). 16 Vertreter verschiedener Hochschulen und Institute, Übersetzungs- und Dolmetschwissenschaftler sowie in der Praxis tätige Dolmetscher nahmen teil. Das wichtigste Arbeitsergebnis ist das Grundkonzept des „doppelten Y-Modells", auf das sich alle Teilnehmer am Ende der Tagung einigten und das in Form eines Thesenpapiers u.a. an die Kultusbehörden verschickt wurde. Konkret bedeutet dies, daß empfohlen wird, künftig zunächst nach dem gemeinsamen Grundkurs (propädeutisches Jahr) das wissenschaftlich-sinologische Studium von der Sprachmittlerausbildung zu trennen. Letztere soll sich nach der Vor- bzw. Zwischenprüfung wiederum in gesonderte Übersetzer- und Dolmetscherstudiengänge aufspalten. Ein Tagungsbericht und das Thesenpapier sind in diesem Heft unter BERICHTE abgedruckt.

***** Projekt „Richtlinien für Chinesisch an Gymnasien" in Nordrhein-Westfalen abgeschlossen**

Die Ende 1988 begonnene Arbeit an den Richtlinien für Chinesisch an Gymnasien für das Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen ist nunmehr nach insgesamt 17 meist zweitägigen Sitzungen abgeschlossen. Der Lehrplan besteht aus den Kapiteln Lernziele, Lerninhalte, Lernorganisation, Lernerfolgsüberprüfungen und einem Anhang. In zweierlei Hinsicht ist er wegbereitend für die künftige Entwicklung des gymnasialen Chinesischunterrichts