

The Analysis and Evaluation of Chinese Textbooks of Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University (Chinese Program)

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were 1) to analyze the content of the Chinese textbooks used by UBRU lecturers of Chinese in 2017, 2) to compare the amount of the same vocabularies between these Chinese textbooks and those in HSK 3 to HSK 5, which were parts of international standardized exams that test and rate Chinese language proficiency for non-native Chinese speakers and 3) to evaluate the suitability of Chinese text books selected by UBRU Chinese Program that should be equivalent to the standard of HSK 3 to HSK 6 in terms of the amount of vocabulary. The samples were six Chinese textbooks used in six Chinese subjects: 1) 当代汉语 (一), 2) 当代汉语 (二), 3) 发展汉语(一), 4) 发展汉语(二), 5) 当代汉语 (三) and 6) 成功之路进步 (一). These Chinese textbooks were selected for teaching year one to year three students majoring in Chinese in 2017. The analysis checklist and percentage average were used for data analysis.

The results of this study revealed that the content of each Chinese textbook was suitable for students' learning ability and also complied with each course description of the Chinese subjects. In addition, the proportion of the same vocabulary compared with that in HSK 3 to HSK 6 showed statically significant similarities.

Keywords: Chinese textbooks, Content, the amount of the same vocabulary, HSK 3 – 5, UBRU Chinese program

Introduction

Teaching and learning Chinese in Higher Education deals with opportunities and challenges faced by lectures and learners of Chinese. Chinese education in Thailand, especially in higher education, has been considered to promote widely by opening the elective Chinese courses including the Chinese major. In Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University, the Chinese program has been opened to serve those who wish to learn Chinese as major subject since 2004. Most Thai students majoring in Chinese are from rural areas and have no background in Chinese. One of the challenges of UBRU lecturers of Chinese is how to improve their Chinese major students to compete with others in the real world after their graduation. Thus, UBRU Chinese Program seeks for the ways to help students to succeed in their Chinese study by collaborating with the university partners in China to receive the native Chinese lecturers coming to teach their students, sending the Chinese major students to gain more knowledge and experiences in the university partners, selecting the effective teaching materials and updated Chinese textbooks to teach their students, etc. In addition, UBRU Chinese Program sets the conditions for improving the Chinese proficiency of the students before their graduation. One of the conditions is passing the international standardized examination (HSK 4).

In order to help the students succeed in their test, UBRU Chinese Program considers that effective Chinese textbooks used in all Chinese subjects could help them pass the HSK. However, Chinese textbooks used for teaching have not been seriously synthesized and analyzed by UBRU Chinese lecturers. Due to the condition of passing the HSK examination made by UBRU Chinese Program, the amount of the same vocabulary in each Chinese textbook compared with that in HSK 3 - 5 is also one of the key factors to help the students majoring in Chinese pass this condition. To make those who are interested in this study understand more about the HSK, the researcher would like to explain more about HSK and present the criteria of the amount of the vocabulary in each level of HSK (Chinese Proficiency Test) as follows.

HSK (Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi) or the Chinese Proficiency Test is an international standardized exam which tests and rates Chinese language proficiency. It evaluates Chinese language abilities for non-native Chinese speakers in terms of using the Chinese language in their daily, academic and professional lives. HSK test was launched in 1984. In 1991, the first HSK test was held outside of China. Since then, the HSK test centers have set up in China and countries all over the world. (Chinese Testing International, 2017)

The new HSK test consists of a writing test and a speaking test, which are independent of each other. There are six levels of writing tests, namely the HSK level 1,2,3,4,5, and 6. There are three levels of speaking tests, namely the HSK Speaking Test (beginner, intermediate and advanced level). (Hutong School, 2017) During the speaking test, test takers' speeches will be recorded.

Table 1 The amount of vocabulary in HSK 3 – HSK 5

No.	Level of HSK	Standard of amount of vocabulary (words)
1	HSK 3	600 words
2	HSK 4	1,200 words
3	HSK 5	2,500 words

Objectives of the study

1. To analyze the content of the Chinese textbooks used by UBRU lecturers of Chinese in 2017;
2. To compare the amount of the same vocabularies between these Chinese textbooks and those in HSK 3 to HSK 5;
3. To evaluate the suitability of Chinese text books selected by UBRU Chinese Program that should be equivalent to the standard of HSK 3 to HSK 5 in terms of the amount of vocabulary.

Research Methodology and Data Analysis

1. The samples were six Chinese textbooks: 1) 当代汉语 (一), 2) 当代汉语 (二), 3) 发展汉语(一), 4) 发展汉语(二), 5) 当代汉语 (三) and 6) 成功之路进步 (一) that were used for teaching the Thai students majoring in Chinese of UBRU (year 1 to year 3).
2. The analysis procedures were conducted by: 1) randomizing the six Chinese subjects from year 1 to year 3 of the Chinese curriculum of UBRU Chinese program; 2) collecting the textbooks that were used in these six courses for data analysis; and 3) analyzing the data by using the analysis checklist and percentage average.

Results of the study

The results of this study were presented as follows:

Table 2 The content of the Chinese textbooks used by UBRU Chinese Program

No.	Subject	Year	Semester	Name of textbook	Be Equivalent to HSK
1	Basic Chinese 1	1	1	当代汉语 (一)	HSK 3
2	Basic Chinese 3	2	1	当代汉语 (二)	HSK 4
3	Listening and Speaking 1	1	1	发展汉语(一)	HSK 3
4	Listening and Speaking 3	2	1	发展汉语(二)	HSK 4
5	Intermediate Chinese 1	3	1	当代汉语 (三)	HSK 5
6	Intermediate Chinese 2	3	2	成功之路进步 (一)	HSK 5

The summary from the table 2 revealed that the content of each Chinese subject was equivalent to the standard of HSK 3 – 5. The sequences of content were designed from basic levels to more difficult ones. The patterns in each lesson of each Chinese textbook were similar. The lessons in each textbook started from: 1) vocabulary, 2) patterns of conversation, 3) Reading Parts, 4) Grammar Rules & Explanation, and 5) Drills & Exercises.

In the researcher's perspective and data analysis, the contents in the textbooks, namely, 当代汉语 (一) and 发展汉语(一) were equivalent to the standard of HSK 3, 当代汉语 (二) and 发展汉语(二) were equivalent to the standard of HSK 4, 当代汉语 (三) and 成功之路进步 (一) were equivalent to the standard of HSK 5. The UBRU Chinese lecturers selected appropriate textbooks to suit the learning level of the students. Interestingly, the sequences of the difficulty levels of the content in each textbook were designed for non-native speakers of Chinese. The courses 'Basic Chinese 1' and 'Listening and Speaking 1' were written both Chinese phonetic alphabets (汉语拼音) and Chinese characters (汉字) to help foreign learners who start learning Chinese understand more easily. Thus, the basic daily conversations and basic grammar usages, including the word repetition tasks (both versions) were frequently found in these two textbooks. In contrast, the Chinese phonetic alphabets (汉语拼音) were hardly found in the Chinese textbooks of these

subjects: ‘Basic Chinese 3’, ‘Listening and Speaking 3’, ‘Intermediate Chinese 1’ and ‘Intermediate Chinese 2’. It was found only Chinese characters (汉字) in all lessons of the Chinese textbooks by means of the sequences of difficulty.

Table 3 The proportion of the same vocabulary compared with that in HSK 3 to HSK 5

No.	Subject	Name of textbook	Be Equivalent to HSK (Content)	Proportion of the same vocabulary compared with HSK 3 to HSK 5 (Percentage average)
1	Basic Chinese 1	当代汉语 (一)	HSK 3	82%
2	Basic Chinese 3	当代汉语 (二)	HSK 4	86%
3	Listening and Speaking 1	发展汉语 (一)	HSK 3	82%
4	Listening and Speaking 3	发展汉语 (二)	HSK 4	80%
5	Intermediate Chinese 1	当代汉语 (三)	HSK 5	84%
6	Intermediate Chinese 2	成功之路 进步 (一)	HSK 5	82%

The summary from the table 3 revealed that the proportions of the same vocabulary compared with that in HSK 3 to HSK 5 of these six Chinese textbook were equivalent to the standard of HSK 3 – 5. All percentage averages indicated that the vocabulary both in these Chinese textbooks and HSK 3 – 5 have significant similarities. In other words, these Chinese textbooks officially approved by the Chinese government for teaching non-native speakers of Chinese were synthesized and analyzed in the content and other related parts by the Chinese experts before publishing. Besides, these Chinese textbooks were also designed to support non-native speakers of Chinese to apply for taking the tests of HSK. In the researcher’s perspective and data analysis, these Chinese textbooks were appropriate for the non-native speakers of Chinese who study Chinese as major subject. Besides the proportion of the amount of the same vocabulary, all learning language skills: listening skill, speaking skill, reading skill and writing skill, were designed properly for foreign learners.

Conclusion and Discussion

In the researcher's perspective and data analysis, it was concluded that the content in the textbooks, namely, 当代汉语 (一) and 发展汉语(一) were equivalent to the standard of HSK 3, 当代汉语 (二) and 发展汉语(二) were equivalent to the standard of HSK 4, 当代汉语 (三) and 成功之路进步 (一) were equivalent to the standard of HSK 5. In addition, the proportions of the amount of the same vocabulary compared with those in HSK 3 to HSK 5 of these six Chinese textbook were equivalent to the standard of HSK 3 – 5.

As mentioned in the results of the study in the item 4, the researcher assumed that these Chinese textbooks were specifically designed for non-native Chinese speakers. The patterns and sequences of all lessons in these textbooks were mostly the same. These would help foreign learners learn Chinese to gain knowledge and be able to use Chinese for their daily communication as well as for their further study effectively. In term of UBRU Chinese Program, taking the HSK examination is one of the conditions of the undergraduate students' graduation. Thus, the selection of Chinese textbooks to teach the Chinese major students should be given a high priority. If the students learn from the ineffective Chinese textbooks, their opportunity to pass the HSK examination seemed impossible. One of the duties of all lecturers of Chinese besides teaching efficiently is choosing the best teaching materials and texts for their students. This study indicated that UBRU Chinese lecturers concentrate on selecting Chinese textbooks for their Chinese major students. However, due to the time constraint, the researcher could not be able to doubly check the effectiveness of these Chinese textbooks by distributing the questionnaire (the satisfaction survey) to the stake-holders: the lecturers of Chinese and the Chinese major students who use these textbooks. The suggestion to those who are interested in extending this research study is doubly checking by using the satisfaction survey to the stake-holders. It is highly hoped that the results of this study would be beneficial to those who would like to select the appropriate Chinese textbooks to learn.

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