

# How to Use Inquiry Questions in a Lesson——Teaching Chinese as a Second Language

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**Abstract:** The teaching of Chinese as a second language has attracted wide attention at home and abroad. Therefore, in the process of its continuous development, teachers continue to explore new teaching methods. At present, in the process of language teaching, some teachers are trying a variety of teaching methods, aiming at stimulating students' enthusiasm and cultivating their learning and thinking abilities. Based on relevant theories and my own teaching experience, this paper takes the topic of teaching Chinese New Year as an example to show how to use inquiry questions in a lesson. These questions can guide students to learn Chinese and Chinese culture step by step. When students learn what they want to know through their own efforts, they will get a sense of satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Teaching methods; Inquiry questions; Chinese teaching

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The first and the most important thing that needs to be sure is the definition of inquiry. From the dictionary Merriam-Webster, it means (1) a request for information; (2) a systematic investigation often of a matter of public interest; (3) examination into facts or principles: research. Inquiry based learning is one of the most popular methods that is used by teachers and educator currently. The focus of the method is on developing engaging and significant questions for students to investigate. As a language teacher, I will share my ideas from the perspective of language teaching. Language plays a critical role in learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs publicly (interpersonal plane) as new ideas are shared and privately (intrapersonal plane) as these ideas are considered and reflected upon against the backdrop of one's prior experiences and understandings. Building on this framework, language is considered more than a form of communication, it is viewed as the way individuals construct meaning and learn new knowledge and skills (Andy R. et al. 2011)<sup>[1]</sup>. Language is a tool for students to learn different cultures, traditions, views, and so on. However, language learning can't simply be boring repetition, retelling, and doing exercises. Students should be allowed to dig, innovate, and discover by themselves. Therefore, inquiry is a great way to use in teaching process.

Teachers should be knowledgeable of the specific field, are committed to students and their learning and will be responsible for managing and supervising students' learning, use different teaching methods, think about their practice systematically and learn from experience. How to assess students, thinking about assessments methods are also important focus. If someone wants to build a quality teaching, they need to keep this in the mind, then design the inquiry questions in teaching plan. I do want to develop deeper understanding about quality teaching. Just like Nieto, et al (2002) said, if schools can no longer serve the children who most need an excellent and high-quality public education, how can we claim that education is the best way to alleviate poverty and despair?<sup>[2]</sup>

For this paper, the topic "Chinese New Year" is an example to use inquiry questions in the lesson. Learner language level is novice. The research Question of this lesson is "How to assess students' knowledge of Chinese New Year?". The following table shows that the data needs to collect and the purpose of the data. It also illustrates that how to use and analyze each piece of the data.

Table 1: Data to collect and Purpose

Data to Collect	Purpose / How to use/analyze each piece of data you collect?
A Survey about Chinese New Year This survey will ask students some basic information about Chinese New Year. Students will fill out the survey before the learning process.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.From students answers of the survey, I will use them to connect with the facts of how people celebrate Chinese New Year.</li> <li>2.I will count the number of questionnaires and the quality of the answers to the questions. What questions did the students answer, and what were the unanswered questions.</li> <li>3.By using these data, I will learn about how much knowledge about Chinese New Year that students have already known. I can also learn that which students have little grasp of this knowledge point, and which students have already had a deep understanding. The information will help me to do group design and instruction. In addition, I will learn that whether the questions in the questionnaire are valid, and analyze which questions students may not be able to answer or there are problems in the questionnaire itself.</li> </ol>
Students' work Give students research paper which there will be some questions on it and the resources that students can use to do research about Chinese New Year.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Students' products will show in the class. These answers will be list on the board, which can be seen by all students. All students discuss together and make sure which is the correct answers to the research question.</li> <li>2. Using the information that students have searched to teach the topic Chinese New Year. During this step, I will design different questions and guide student to think and compare the information. From the data, I will be able to know that how much information about Chinese New Year that they have learned until this step.</li> <li>3.Then, I can make supplements and conduct formal teaching on this topic.</li> </ol>
Assessment: quiz game (There are some famous and useful website which can be used as teaching tools like Blooket, Wordwall, Quizlet, Kahoot and so on. Educators can choose any one of them according to the teaching situation and their teaching plan.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.This game will show the data the accuracy of every student and the whole class. In addition, it will show the correct rate of each question.</li> </ol> <p>After students play the game, I will get the data that how many students master the knowledge and which knowledge that students are still confused with. All the questions form the game are related to the question "How do Chinese people celebrate Chinese New Year?"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.Analyze the data from the game, including the accuracy of the whole class, the accuracy of every student, the accuracy of different questions.</li> <li>3.By using this data, I will decide that the content that I need to reteach next time.</li> </ol>

After the preparation for the lesson, then the teacher should write the whole teaching plan, especially design the right questions<sup>[3]</sup> and how many steps and the time for every step. Table 2 shows the specific teaching phrase and the time.

Table 2: Teaching plan

Action Plan	Timing
Step 1: Before the teaching I will talk to my colleagues about the teaching plan and discuss the feasibility of the plan and the appropriateness of teaching resources.	This will happen at the beginning of spring semester. About 1 hour
Step 2: A Survey about Chinese New Year <sup>[4]</sup>  Question examples: What is Chinese New Year? Do you know about the legend of it? What do people do to their house at this time of the year? List three things that you know about Chinese New Year.	Before Spring Festival Students will take 10 minute to complete the questionnaire.
Step 3: Student's research and report Give students research paper which there will be some questions on it and the resources that students can use to do research about Chinese New Year. Such as video, reading, and pictures. Students will be divided into different group, then they need to complete their research with their group members. Question examples: 1.Is Spring Festival the same as Chinese New Year? 2.Why is Chinese New Year celebrated on different date? 3.How long will Chinese New Year last? 4.How do Chinese people celebrate Chinese New Year? 5.What do people eat during Chinese New Year? 6.Why red is the color of Chinese New Year? 7.Why do Chinese people set off firecrackers for Chinese New Year? 8.How to plan a visit during Chinese New Year?	Students will take 45 minutes to do research.
Step 4: Teaching process Students share their research first. At the same time, the teacher collects all the information that students have and summary in the class. Then the teacher will begin the teaching process: supplement the information and introduce Chinese New Year to all the students. Teaching some daily conversation and words that people will say during this festival.	Students take 30 minutes to share and the teacher will need 10 minutes to do summary and teach new content.

<p style="text-align: center;">Step 5: Assessment—quiz game</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Students will login to the game link and answer the questions on the game.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">This will take about 10-15 minutes.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Step 6:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Share the whole teaching resources and teaching plan to the Chinese teachers in the same community. Reflect the whole inquiry plan and discuss with my mentor teacher about the questions that I met during the teaching process and analyze about the assessment methods that I use during the teaching process.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">After the whole teaching process</p> <p style="text-align: center;">At least 1 hour.</p>

In conclusion, table 1 and table 2 show that how to use inquiry questions in a lesson, the readers may have some ideas. As a path toward improving--and evaluating--critical thinking skills among students (Ruminski & Hanks, 1995), researchers and practitioners alike are interested in evidence-based methods for teaching students how to develop effective inquiry questions to guide research projects [5]. Inquiry questions can lead learners to find answers by themselves, which is a great way to help students improve their learning skills.

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