

Selection of 3,000 items of intermediate Chinese vocabulary based on a Chinese corpus

Toshiyasu OGAWA

Every year since 2000, we have held vocabulary examinations late in October for those studying “Chinese I Basic B” (1st grade autumn term dividend).

This examination requires that students have completely mastered the “Basic Chinese Vocabulary Book” (750 words). If they cannot pass this examination, they are unable to complete “Chinese I Basic B”. Thanks to this examination, student’s basic Chinese abilities are greatly improving.

On the other hand, the Chinese capabilities of students in the Chinese intermediate class (2nd grade), has not improved sufficiently. This is mainly because of the lack of full-time teachers—meaning that part-time teachers have to be employed—and there are no suitable measures to improve the students’ Chinese ability. As such, we decided, based on the “Basic Chinese Vocabulary Book,” to provide a new “Chinese Vocabulary Book” to improve the 2nd grade students’ abilities.

In the Chinese intermediate class, we expect students to be able pass the 3rd grade of the Test of Chinese Proficiency, which have a level equivalent to the old HSK [汉语水平考试] Level 6. This is because at this level, students must have enough ability to study in China as well as other Chinese speaking countries and regions. However, we cannot make students learn Chinese using the HSK Vocabulary Book [甲乙丙丁], as Vocabulary Book it has over 5,000 words, which may be too much vocabulary for 2nd grade students to study, and lacks contemporary words, such as “mobile phone” [手机]. We have to say that HSK Vocabulary Book is not suitable for study at the 2nd grade level.

In order to make a new wordbook, we investigated Beijing University’s corpus, the Test of Chinese Proficiency’s vocabulary, and the new HSK vocabularies. Based on these, we succeeded in selecting 1,500 words for the new wordbook.