

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES OF ROMANIA'S ONLINE CHINESE TEACHING UNDER THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC

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Abstract: *With the outbreak of COVID-19, holding teaching activities online has posed a new challenge to Chinese teaching in Romania at the stage of exploration. Although online teaching has the advantages of being free from space restrictions and being able to replay courses, there are also negative factors such as teachers' lack of network technology skills, differences in students' acceptance ability, lack of corresponding network teaching resources, difficulty in classroom supervision and instability of the network. In order to solve or alleviate this series of problems, on the one hand, it is urgent to further improve the network teaching software and make full use of the network teaching resource. On the other hand, teachers also need to effectively improve network teaching skills, strengthen network classes and after-class offline interactive activities as much as possible, and strive to promote students' autonomous learning.*

Keywords: *Online Chinese teaching, advantages, challenges, problems, strategies.*

1. Introduction

Since 2020, COVID-19 has been raging around the world, which has greatly affected the Chinese language teaching activities in Romania. Confronted with the unexpected situations, Chinese teachers in Confucius institutes cannot be dispatched from China to Romania, teachers and students can not have face-to-face classroom activities. In this situation, Romanian Chinese teaching has been mostly carried out online. Facing the large-scale shift paradigm from “offline” to “online” Chinese education, it is worth discussing how teachers can advance with the new condition, how students can effectively participate, and how teaching and learning materials can continue to follow up. In this regard, this paper will preliminarily sort out the relevant advantages, challenges and problems on the basis of the Chinese teaching experience in “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava in Romania, and try to put forward countermeasures.

2. Advantages and Challenges of Online Chinese Teaching

Everything has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of online teaching through the Internet are obvious. Generally speaking, there are three main advantages:

Firstly, it is not limited by space, and the place of class is more flexible. The Chinese teaching objects of “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava are mainly university students from different faculties. Students can easily access the online Chinese classes with electronic equipment and network at home. The Chinese teachers can also choose appropriate places to teach according to different conditions. Compared with offline teaching, online teaching saves traffic time and provides corresponding convenience for teachers and students.

Secondly, online teaching can be replayed. At present, online teaching platforms such as Google, classroom, Zoom and other major online teaching platforms in Romania have recording function. This enables students to review and consolidate relevant knowledge by watching playback after class if they did not master in class or if they couldn't manage to participate in the class. Compared with the traditional offline classroom, which can only rely on brain memory and notes, this advantage of online class has great progress in educational technology and means.

Thirdly, online teaching can expand teaching resources. With the promotion of online teaching, many network teaching platforms and clients came into being. This makes teachers not only use the resources in the teaching materials, but also collect relevant videos, pictures and other materials to make the classroom more rich and vivid. In addition, teachers can also recommend course-related computer apps, mobile apps, online Chinese language games and other resources to students. It can be said that online Chinese teaching provides material conditions for the diversification and interest of educational forms.

However, compared with the advantages of online teaching, it also brings more challenges to Romanian Chinese teaching. The key factor is that both teachers and students are passively enrolled in the era of online education because of this sudden incident of COVID-19. Most of them are lack the psychological, knowledge and skills preparation.

First of all, for most Chinese teachers, their classes are generally based on the traditional offline teaching mode. It is conceivable that after suddenly switching to online teaching mode, there will be a series of maladjustment. In terms of teaching methods, the most commonly used teaching methods in teaching Chinese as a foreign language in Romania are the blackboard demonstration method and the classroom game teaching method, which are the products of typical offline teaching modes. It is worth thinking about how to continue to apply the offline teaching methods to online teaching, specifically speaking of teaching tools. For example, in the offline teaching mode, in order to help the student's practice of the Chinese character writing, teachers often use a number of writing materials, such as water writing cloth, water writing paper, etc. However, in the online teaching mode, how to carry out such practice activities becomes a thoughtful question.

Moreover, for most students, the sudden advent of online teaching makes them lose their familiar learning environment. In the new learning environment of online teaching, a series of teaching elements that students have long been accustomed to, such as situational dialogue and teamwork activities have failed or the effect has been greatly reduced. Many textbooks for teaching Chinese as a foreign language are also compiled based on communicative teaching method. Once they lose the usual phy classroom, can they quickly adapt to online teaching? If not, what impact will it have on the teaching effect? All these questions are worth pondering by all the Chinese teachers.

3. Problems in Online Chinese Teaching Practice

The main problem in teaching Chinese as a foreign language during the epidemic period is that large-scale online teaching with live broadcast as the main teaching form is different from the previous small-scale online teaching (Li, 2018). There are great differences between teachers' teaching, students' learning and the requirements for teaching materials. According to the author's online teaching practice, this paper believes that the current online teaching still adopts the offline classroom teaching mode to a considerable extent. The traditional mode certainly has its rationality, but it cannot be directly transferred to online mode. The specific problems can be summarized into the following five parts:

Firstly, teachers are inexperienced in online teaching. Online teaching is something totally new and confusing for many teachers. Suddenly, they have changed from instructors to "emerging anchors". It is difficult to change their teaching concepts immediately. In addition, they also have to get used to the new technology of new online teaching platforms. It is not easy to learn, and it is even more difficult to skillfully use them. As to cultivating students' speech skills and communicative ability, teaching Chinese as a foreign language has high requirements for classroom interaction and on-site feedback. The lack of teachers' experience and the limitations of the online teaching model undoubtedly weaken the positive guidance and creativity of teachers and the vivid and lively classroom atmosphere created by students' cooperation.

Secondly, students' acceptance of online teaching varies. Different students have different learning purposes, degrees of consciousness, cultural levels and acceptance abilities. The complexity of the levels, specifications and learning requirements of teaching objects also inevitably requires the diversification of teaching plan. The decisive factor of language learning is the learners themselves, not the external conditions. It is characterized by various main factors restricting language learning, such as purpose, age, personality, experience, knowledge, cultural background, etc. (Liu, 1997). Teaching objects of different learning motives and linguistic acceptance have different concepts. However, in online class teachers cannot observe students' reactions. Not only is classroom feedback difficult to achieve, but also affects teachers' live teaching experience.

Thirdly, the creating of online teaching material resources needs to be encouraged. Teaching materials are the foundation of teaching. When the existing teaching materials cannot meet the all-round needs of online teaching and learning of Chinese as a foreign language, it is imperative to accelerate the construction of online teaching material resources. Moreover, online teaching materials do not reside simply in the electronic processing of paper teaching materials, but are structured, systematic and interactive arrangement, which is matched with corresponding courses. Sending the content of teaching materials to students by taking photos and scanning is not the proper method to take. This kind of mechanical transfer presentation is difficult to meet the personalised and interactive requirements of online teaching. Apart from this, even if the teachers prepare PPT and online resources for the students, there are still very limited resources they can choose to use. Take the example from the Chinese class in USV. The textbooks used in Chinese teaching is *Standard Courses of HSK*, which meet the requirement for the HSK exams. The series of the textbooks only have textbooks and workbooks without any extra online auxiliary resources, such as text-related online games, videos and exercises, which restricted the creativity of the Chinese teachers.

Fourthly, class supervision is difficult. In online teaching, teachers sometimes can only see the number of people in class. In order to ensure the teaching efficiency, most students turn off the microphone and camera. Therefore, it is difficult for teachers to monitor the class. In addition, the regulatory role of teachers in unit testing is also quite limited. For example, it is difficult to control whether students consult materials and discuss topics with other students during the examination.

Fifthly, there are unstable factors in the network. Each student's network situation is different. The teacher also receives some students' feedback on the network during class. For example, the voice is jammed, the teaching video has a black screen when displayed. The unstable factors of the network have greatly reduced the effect of online teaching. In addition, when handing in homework and answer sheets, some students will be late due to network reasons, which makes it difficult for teachers to collect homework in a unified time, thus indirectly increasing teachers' workload.

4. Online Chinese Teaching Strategies

The above-mentioned series of problems can be improved and solved as long as the Chinese can summarise and analyse the problems and try to adopt necessary methods. In what follows, this paper puts forward a range of suggestions meant to better the online Chinese teaching in Romania.

➤ Strengthen the Online Teaching Skills Training of Chinese Teachers

The Chinese teachers should change their teaching concepts, adjust the rhythm of their teaching process, optimize their class design by mastering the teaching materials, and control their teaching time within the effective learning time as far as possible. Besides, the ability to use multimedia technology is incorporated into the ability evaluation system of Chinese teachers. By organizing online teaching training and exercises, carrying out online teaching competitions and performance evaluation, the pressure is appropriately increased to stimulate teachers' learning motivation and encourage teachers to continuously improve their online teaching skills. In addition, teachers can not only stay at the primary stage of pushing teaching content to students with the help of "online" means, but also consider adopting corresponding strategies to effectively guide students' learning activities. Attention should be paid to adding games, designing effective questions and interaction, and providing unique interface functions, such as countdown answer, random questions, breakthrough games, etc.

➤ Strengthen the Online and Offline Interactive Activities to Improve Students' Autonomous Learning Competence

Whether in online or in on-site teaching, teachers' understanding and mastery of students' basic characteristics, learning motivation and learning effect are essential. On the one hand, teachers should pay more attention to the daily class interaction, homework completion and after-class feedback; On the other hand, they can try to establish an E-learning group for students. In this group, students can submit homework and share their learning experience. Teachers can answer questions for students and share learning resources. In the specific communication process, teachers and students try to communicate in Chinese, so as to cultivate students' language sense and create a language environment.

➤ **Developing Digital Teaching Materials for Chinese Teaching**

The compilation of electronic teaching materials for online Chinese teaching should follow the principle of the unity of knowledge and teaching. In terms of content preparation, the front-line excellent Chinese teachers can share their online course resources for the preparation of digital teaching materials. In addition, in the compilation of the digital Chinese teaching materials, the Romanian language and culture should also be considered. Finally, it is expected to open the online feedback column, provide teaching materials feedback and return visit services for teaching institutions, teachers and students. The collection and analysis of feedback information will improve the digital teaching materials and realize various functions such as textbook resource retrieval, course playback and online testing, so as to meet the teaching needs of teachers and students' autonomous diverse learning needs.

5. Conclusion

In the Internet era, online teaching is likely to become the general trend. Against the backdrops of COVID-19, online teaching has become a major form of class teaching. In this context, the discussion on online teaching methods is highly encouraged. Not only the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language, but also various disciplines are facing the challenges of how to adapt to online teaching, which can be described as a very important current topic. This paper summarised the advantages, challenges and problems of Romania's online Chinese teaching and put forward some suggestions for online Chinese teaching strategies from the author's personal perspective. We hope that more Chinese teachers will adapt to the situation, practise hard, think actively, and contribute to the theory and practice of online teaching of Chinese as a foreign language.

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