



Research on the Problems and Countermeasures of Confucius Institute Teaching Chinese to Foreigners

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Abstract: Under the influence of ideological differences between China and foreign countries and the imbalance of cultural supply and demand, the Confucius Institute's teaching of Chinese as a foreign language and the spread of Chinese culture encountered problems such as impervious cultural penetration, shortage of teachers, and imperfect management systems. Based on a brief introduction to the Confucius Institute and International language and cultural institutions, this article conducts a study of the existing problems in teaching Chinese as a foreign language Confucius Institute and proposes three corresponding coping strategies aiming to contribute to Chinese culture exerting broad and sustainable influence in the world.

Keywords: the Confucius Institute ;Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language; Cultural Transmission

1. Introduction

As a non-profit educational institution established by Sino-foreign cooperation, the Confucius Institute plays an important role in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. Since 2004, there have been 541 Confucius Institutes and 1,170 Confucius Classrooms in the world, covering 162 countries (regions) on five continents. However, in recent years, news of foreign institutions closing Confucius Institutes or terminating their cooperation with Confucius Institutes in China has caused Confucius Institutes to be questioned in terms of capital investment, teacher level, and system management in the spread of international language and culture. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the status quo and existing problems of Confucius Institutes, and compare them with language and culture communication agencies in other countries, and put forward countermeasures that will help Confucius Institutes get out of the current predicament, so as to ensure that the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language and Chinese culture "go out" went smoothly.

2. Overview Of The Organizational Development Of Confucius Institutes In China

2.1 Founding background

The Confucius Institute is a non-profit educational institution established by the Office of the Leading Group for the International Promotion of Chinese Language in China. The main content of the Confucius Institute is to provide Chinese language teaching and target people of all ethnic groups in the world, aiming to promote Chinese language and spread Chinese culture.^[1] So far, Confucius Institutes have been established in 154 countries and regions around the world. The hundreds of years of history and tradition of Confucius Institutes have been continuously innovated and carried forward under the inheritance of the Chinese nation and the people of all ethnic groups in the world, and have become an indispensable platform and bridge for the integration of Chinese language in international culture.

2.2 The Development of Confucius Institutes Around the World

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doi: 10.18282/le.v9i8.1974

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According to official statistics from Hanban, as of the end of 2017, there were more than 500 Confucius Institutes in 146 countries or regions around the world, and nearly 1,000 Confucius Classrooms. As the relationship between China and other nations in the world is getting closer, economic and trade relations are heating up, and national exchanges are becoming more frequent, so the Chinese market is also showing a significant upward trend in the international market. Take Russia and Italy as examples. The Russian Ministry of Education and Science has included Chinese in the national unified examination for middle school students.^[2] Russian middle school graduates can use Chinese as their elective subject. For a long time in the future, Chinese will still be popular in Russia. Italy also attaches great importance to the training of Chinese talents. The number of HSK candidates in Italy has been at the forefront of Europe for many years, and it is one of the countries with the largest number of HSK candidates in Europe.

3. Issues In Confucius Institute Teaching Chinese As A Foreign Language

3.1 Problems in the Current Development of Confucius Institutes

The rapid development of the Confucius Institute in the world for more than ten years, while paying attention to its achievements, we cannot ignore the many problems that existed in its development process.

3.1.1 Incomplete Cultural Penetration

In the actual teaching process of the Confucius Institute, the relationship between language teaching and cultural output is not coordinated. Although the college is named after Confucius, it does not effectively spread Confucianism, and the choice of cultural transmission is not clear. Many Confucius Institutes are still in the initial stage of cultural output, mainly focusing on basic elementary Chinese teaching and Chinese martial arts professors. The spread of language and culture has not yet achieved a balance, and cultural penetration is not thorough.

3.1.2 The Shortage of Teachers

Confucius Institutes are expanding rapidly around the world, but the corresponding teachers and teaching materials are relatively lacking, and the teaching effect is not good. In addition, due to cultural differences, Chinese teachers use a Chinese-style instillation-style one-way teaching class for Western students, which is completely different from the Western group discussion and task allocation classroom organization. This results in a lack of participation, a sense of interaction, and a low motivation for students.

3.1.3 Imperfect Operation and Management System

In recent years, the construction of Confucius Institutes has been too fast, and the market research and investigation of various countries have been insufficient, which has led to uneven distribution, and the construction of the organization is not complete enough, and the division of labor between the government and the organization is not clear enough. The management organization lacks pertinence and unity, and the result can only be a waste of resources.

3.2 Questions raised in comparison with language and cultural institutions of various countries

3.2.1 French Alliance and Confucius Institute

The special feature of the French Alliance is that while teaching French language, through various cultural exchange activities, students continue to maintain a strong interest in learning, and deepen their mastery of French knowledge in a pleasant practical atmosphere.^[3] In contrast, the Confucius Institute's curriculum design and extracurricular cultural activities are not innovative. The Confucius Institute pays more attention to the study of Chinese language, adopts a single-output classroom format, and lacks supporting teaching materials.

3.2.2. British Council and Confucius Institute

One of the reasons why the British Council has maintained a good operation since its establishment in 1934 is its excellent operating mechanism. Since its inception, the permanent status of its non-official institutions has been clarified, thus making up for the shortcomings of official institutions, covering a wider range of fields, and avoiding being misunderstood as "cultural aggression" due to excessive government intervention. On the other hand, Confucius Institutes, because Confucius Institutes are funded by the government, are easily misunderstood as a means of "cultural

invasion” by other countries.^[4] And because the management mechanism of the Confucius Institute is not complete compared with that of the British Council, the cooperation between the government and the private sector is not clear enough, and the official accounts of its clients at home and abroad have not maintained a high degree of activity and frequent interaction with the audience.

4. Strategies For Confucius Institutes To Solve Problems Existing In Teaching Chinese As A Foreign Language

4.1 Make Clear Cultural Choices

Shift the focus from language teaching to cultural output. Disseminate Chinese culture in various forms, appropriately reduce the proportion of language teaching in the classroom, and truly “go out”. Use this cultural promotion to realize the glorious mission of the Confucius Institute, spread excellent Chinese culture, and enhance friendly exchanges between countries , Thereby enhancing China’s cultural soft power.

4.2 Improving the Quality of Teachers and Classroom Quality

Teachers are one of the key factors in the development of Confucius Institutes. In view of the current shortage of teachers, it is recommended to use a new training model that combines oriented training and joint training to achieve the improvement of teachers. At the same time, in classroom teaching, choose a more targeted classroom model for different national cultures, and truly “teach students in accordance with their aptitude.” In addition, we must keep pace with the times and hold more fun cultural activities in multiple forms and levels to truly realize the spread of Chinese culture.

4.3 Improve organization and management

For the first time, within the organization, a comprehensive daily management and teaching quality monitoring and evaluation system has been established. Secondly, learn from the excellent experience of language promotion agencies in various countries, open up the Chinese language education market, establish cooperative relations with universities and enterprises, expand its influence, and attract more foreign students.^[5] Third, extensively collect evaluations and opinions from all walks of life and summarize their own problems, so as to take effective measures in a targeted manner, give play to their own characteristics, seek their own development space, and maintain a moderate development trend.

5. Conclusion

As an institution for teaching Chinese as a foreign language, the Confucius Institute carries the enthusiasm of the Chinese people and bears the dual responsibilities of language teaching and cultural dissemination. Its improvement and continuous development are of great significance. Through the above analysis, we found that the Confucius Institute has problems such as the inability to further expand the market demand in teaching Chinese as a foreign language, its unclear positioning, insufficient training for teachers, and insufficient operation and management systems.^[6] In this regard, this article proposes the following countermeasures: firstly, Confucius Institutes need to clarify the friendly identity of non-profit educational institutions to the partner countries, eliminate rumors of “cultural aggression” and eliminate misunderstandings; secondly, improve their own teaching level, such as through more rigorous teachers selection, more appropriate courses and textbooks, ; at the same time, adjust measures to local conditions and teach students in accordance with their aptitude, strengthen exchanges and innovations between cultures, promote the combination of Chinese culture and local culture to facilitate students’ understanding, and look forward to cultural collisions and joint innovations.^[7] In order to have a clearer and more correct development direction for teaching Chinese as a foreign language, it is hoped that teachers who have been teaching in Confucius Institutes for a long time or friends who have more than one year of learning experience in Confucius Institutes can further improve this aspect and share Chinese culture with other countries in the world. The common problems facing mankind provide Chinese wisdom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all, I am very grateful to my instructor, the professor, for his careful guidance of my thesis during the course and after class, which greatly improved my understanding of academic writing and taught me many specific research skills. Knowledge is a vast ocean, insignificant I am just a small boat, thank the teachers who gave me selfless help, so that I can get a glimpse of the vast ocean; thank you dear classmates who gave me care and support, with you, I can better complete the thinking and creation of the thesis, so that I can combine the knowledge of multiple disciplines to view and think about the world more rationally, objectively and dialectically!

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