

The History, Status quo and Development of Chinese Language Teaching at Yale-China Chinese Language Centre, CUHK

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Abstract

With the impact of continual technological development, methods for teaching Chinese at CUHK have changed massively during the last decade. Classroom teaching has shifted from blackboards and chalk to overhead projectors and computer-aided programs, new technologies help students learn languages more effectively, especially Mandarin - a language which is considered one of the most difficult languages in the world.

Economic development is a key factor for change. Since 1978, under Deng Xiaoping's slogan of "gaige kaifang," China's economy has started to prosper, and the country has joined the international world. The focus of the global economy is now shifting from the West to the East. In 2001, China joined the WTO; in 2008, it held the Olympic Games in Beijing; and, in 2010, it held the World Expo in Shanghai. Even the acronym "BRICS" includes two Asian countries: India and China. Above all, China has a population of 1.3 billion people, so it always attracts the media's attention.

Our main theme for this conference is Language Learning, so let us evaluate our language teaching and learning in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. From 1996-1997, we had 163 exchange students, who came mainly from the U.S., Canada, Japan, and Korea (eight countries total). From 2011-2012, we had 1,397 exchange students from 31 different countries join the programme. The composition of students at CUHK is changing drastically. Of course, there is still a large gap before the school reaches the target set by our former Vice-Chancellor Prof. Laurence Lau: increasing the percentage of non-local students to 25% of the total student population. However, the number of foreign students has increased a lot during the last decade.

While the change in employing technology for teaching and learning definitely brings convenience, it also brings challenges and opportunities for teachers: How can teachers draw the attention of students in class when they are busy communicating on Facebook/Twitter/QQ?

Students with good pronunciation skills use applications such as 'Dragon Dictation' to orally dictate Chinese characters instead of writing them stroke by stroke. How can teachers stimulate students' motivation to learn pinyin, and to read and write Chinese?

In teaching Chinese as a second language, what are the most important skills we really want our students to master?

What is the most effective way for teachers and students to interact with each other? Does new technology act as a bridge between teachers and students, or rather, a barrier?

For this research, we plan to interview students to find out their perspectives on these issues, to identify opportunities for teachers with a view towards helping teachers improve their teaching methods, and give students useful advice for learning Chinese Language in an effective way. This paper will address changes in Mandarin

Chinese Language in an effective way. This paper will address the history of Mandarin teaching at Yale-China Chinese Language Centre from 1996 to 2013, status quo of language teaching for teachers and students, and language teaching development for universities, teachers, and students in the Asia Pacific World.