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PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CHINESE UNIVERSITIES

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ПРОБЛЕМЫ ИНОЯЗЫЧНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ В УНИВЕРСИТЕТАХ КИТАЯ

Проблемы преподавания иностранных языков в китайских университетах отражают сложное взаимодействие исторических, культурных и технологических факторов, которые существенно влияют на усвоение языка и вовлеченность студентов. Исторически сложилось так, что преподавание иностранных языков в Китае перешло от традиционных методов заучивания наизусть к более коммуникативным подходам, особенно в связи с глобализацией, которая в начале 1990-х годов привела к переоценке педагогических стратегий. Однако, несмотря на эти изменения, система сталкивается с постоянными проблемами, включая нехватку квалифицированных преподавателей, неэффективные методики обучения и недостаточную вовлеченность студентов, что в совокупности снижает эффективность преподавания языка.

The problems of foreign language education in Chinese universities reflect a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and technological factors that significantly impact language acquisition and student engagement. Historically, foreign language education in China transitioned from traditional rote learning methods to more communicative approaches, particularly as globalization prompted a re-evaluation of pedagogical strategies in the early 1990s. However, despite these shifts, the system grapples with persistent issues, including a shortage of qualified educators, ineffective teaching methodologies, and a lack of student engagement, all of which hinder the overall effectiveness of language instruction.

The rapid expansion of China's economy and the increasing number of international students have led to a pressing demand for quality foreign language education. Yet the pressure to align educational practices with both global standards and ideological conformity poses significant challenges. This tension is compounded by traditional examination-driven pedagogies, which often conflict with the diverse needs of students and the evolving demands of the labor market. Additionally, the integration of technology into language learning remains inconsistent, with many educators struggling to adapt to digital tools and methodologies that could enhance the learning experience.

Controversies surrounding foreign language education in Chinese universities also highlight the sociocultural context that shapes students' perceptions of language learning. Many students view language acquisition merely as a means to an academic end, rather than as a pathway to cultural understanding and global engagement.

This disconnect, alongside the regional disparities in educational resources and practices, further complicates the landscape of foreign language education in China. Efforts to reform curricula and pedagogical approaches often face resistance, leading to a gap between policy intentions and classroom realities.

In summary, the challenges facing foreign language education in Chinese universities are multifaceted and demand comprehensive reforms. Addressing these issues requires innovative teaching practices, enhanced professional development for educators, and a shift in student engagement strategies to ensure that language education effectively meets the needs of an increasingly interconnected world.

The development of foreign language education in China has undergone significant transformation, particularly in response to globalization and changing educational demands. In the early 1990s, foreign language education was primarily viewed through a traditional lens, focusing on rote learning and grammar-translation methods. However, this approach faced mounting criticism as globalization accelerated, necessitating a shift toward more communicative and contextually relevant language instruction.

The rapid expansion of China's economy and its integration into the global market prompted a dramatic increase in the number of foreign students seeking education in Chinese universities. Between 2011 and 2017, there was an increase of over 67 percent in higher education enrollment, reflecting a growing desire among international students for quality education and better opportunities. This influx has not only enriched the academic environment but has also led to a reevaluation of the pedagogical approaches employed in language education.

In the last decade, the convergence of hyper-globalization, the Belt and Road Initiative, and the national "Double First-Class" agenda has intensified pressures on foreign language education. These policies have called for innovative curriculum reforms that balance global competence with ideological conformity, often creating tension between internationalization efforts and the need for ideological alignment in educational content. Researchers have noted that conventional examination-driven pedagogies are increasingly at odds with the diverse needs of learners in a rapidly changing labor market [1].

Despite the emphasis on modernizing foreign language education, significant challenges remain. The traditional focus on examination results has contributed to a lack of qualified foreign language professionals, leading to what some describe as a shortage of compound foreign language talents in China. Moreover, the emergence of artificial intelligence technologies has further complicated the landscape, prompting questions about the relevance of traditional language education amidst advancements in translation technology. In response, there is a growing recognition of the need for innovative teaching methodologies that address the evolving demands of both students and the job market. The landscape of foreign language education in Chinese universities is fraught with several challenges that hinder effective learning and engagement among students.

One of the primary issues is related to classroom management and teaching methodologies, where educators often face difficulties in accommodating diverse student needs and varying proficiency levels. This lack of tailored instructional strategies can lead to disengagement and lower overall academic performance among students, ultimately affecting their language acquisition and proficiency outcomes. Research has consistently shown that student engagement is a crucial determinant of successful learning behaviors and outcomes in language education. A direct correlation exists between student engagement and essential skills such as critical thinking, motivation, and problem-solving. Unfortunately, many students experience low engagement, which not only exacerbates issues such as academic burnout and high dropout rates but also undermines their mastery of foreign languages [2].

The rapid advancement of technology presents both challenges and opportunities in language teaching. Many educators struggle with integrating digital tools into their pedagogy effectively. The disparity between technology's rapid evolution and instructors' digital competence can lead to underutilization of technological resources, limiting innovative learning experiences for students. Moreover, ambivalent attitudes towards technology among educators and students alike can hinder the successful adoption of technology-mediated learning practices.

The ongoing reforms in English curriculum aim to shift the focus from traditional rote learning to more practical and humanistic approaches. However, these reforms face significant hurdles in implementation, including resistance to change from educators and insufficient training on new pedagogical methods. Consequently, while the intentions behind curriculum changes are sound, their actualization often falls short of enhancing the quality of foreign language education.

The sociocultural context of language learning also poses a challenge. Many students struggle to connect their language studies with real-world applications, diminishing their motivation to engage deeply with the material. This disconnect can result in students perceiving

language learning merely as a means to an academic end rather than as a tool for cultural and global understanding, further impeding their engagement and success. The landscape of foreign language education in Chinese universities is marked by significant regional disparities, influenced by local educational practices, cultural values, and social expectations. These factors contribute to varying experiences for foreign students and educators within different regions of China.

Cultural differences play a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of foreign students in China. For instance, foreign children who attend public schools in Baoding often face challenges in adapting to the Chinese education model, which emphasizes rigorous memorization and a high volume of homework, unlike many Western educational systems that prioritize outdoor activities and creative pursuits. The stark contrast in socialization practices, with many Chinese children being raised by grandparents under the one-child policy, further complicates interactions between local and foreign students.

The educational objectives of Chinese students also differ from those in Western countries. Research indicates that Chinese students generally exhibit more performance-oriented goals compared to their North American counterparts, a trend driven by the competitive nature of the Chinese educational system. However, it is essential to avoid overgeneralizations, as there are instances where Chinese students display mastery-oriented goals, particularly in university settings, where English proficiency is considered a core competency.

Language learning itself presents a myriad of challenges that vary regionally. For instance, students may struggle with the contextual factors surrounding English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, which can be exacerbated by their prior experiences with language education in their home countries. The lack of uniformity in pronunciation and regional dialects within China can also hinder effective communication and comprehension for foreign learners[3].

The influence of local educational institutions further exacerbates these regional differences. Some universities may have better resources and support systems for foreign language education than others, leading to disparities in the quality of education provided. For example, institutions with a focus on research and academic excellence may foster an environment that encourages innovative teaching practices, while others may struggle with bureaucratic challenges that limit pedagogical advancements. Foreign language education in Chinese universities has evolved significantly over recent years, yet it faces a multitude of challenges that impact its effectiveness. A primary concern is the shortage of qualified language educators, which hampers the overall quality of instruction and the development of compound foreign language talents. Furthermore, the mismatch between traditional teaching methods and the demands of a rapidly globalizing world creates tension within the educational framework.

Research methodologies in the field of foreign language education have also been critiqued. There is a call for more diverse approaches, including mixed-methods research and classroom-based experimentation, to better understand and address the complex dynamics of language acquisition. This suggests that a broader methodological perspective could illuminate the specific challenges faced by learners and educators alike, thereby improving pedagogical strategies.

Affective factors such as motivation and engagement are critical for successful language learning outcomes. It has been shown that a strong connection between learners and instructors can significantly enhance engagement, which is essential for academic achievement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. In this respect, the effectiveness of language acquisition is not solely dependent on pedagogical methods, but also on the interpersonal dynamics within the classroom. National policies also play a crucial role in shaping the landscape of foreign language education in China. The dual focus on global competence and ideological alignment complicates curriculum design and implementation, as educators must balance international standards with local values. This tension necessitates a careful consideration of how policies are enacted within educational settings, influencing both teaching practices and student outcomes.

Literature

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