

# Investigation and Reflection on the Satisfaction Degree of Curriculum Setting for Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages A Case Study of MTCSOL Program in Five Universities in Guangzhou

YanJun Wang<sup>1</sup> Xindan Hu<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *College of Chinese Language and Culture, Jinan University, Guangzhou, Guangdong 510610, China*

*\*Corresponding author. Email: 532895263@qq.com*

## ABSTRACT

Based on a questionnaire survey of 232 students majoring in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages in five universities in Guangzhou, this paper probes into some common problems existing in the current curriculum setting, such as the lack of practical courses and opportunities, the lack of diversity of foreign language courses, and the weak ability of students in scientific research and teaching. To solve these problems, the article has put up some measures and suggestions.

**Keywords:** *Chinese international education, Curriculum, Training mode, Investigation and research.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the Master of Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (MTCSOL) program began to recruit part-time postgraduates. In 2007 and 2009, the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council issued a guiding document called Instructional Training Program for MTCSOL. It gradually formed a core curriculum-oriented, module expansion as a supplement and practical training as the focus of the curriculum system. However, from the perspective of training effects and social employment, there are still many problems in the curriculum setting and training mode of the major of MTCSOL in universities.

Wu Yinghui (2014) pointed out that the scale of MTCSOL is expanding so fast that the quality is uneven. Shi Jiawei (2016) pointed out that the university courses is more in name than in reality, the course structure is not reasonable and the theory and practice is out of line.

Curriculum setting is a key link in the talent training program, which can directly reflect whether the training mode is reasonable and scientific. They can also be used to predict the

teaching effect to a certain extent. The proportion of various courses, what to teach and how to teach are particularly important if universities want to find out the direction of training and to guarantee the effectiveness.

From the data collected so far, there are few research results on the curriculum and training mode of MTCSOL. Besides, most scholars came to almost the same results from different angles. For example, Zhao Jinming (2006), Yan Xiangru (2013) and Zhao Yang (2016) all emphasized that to strengthen the education of Chinese basic knowledge and linguistic knowledge is the most important, while Chen Qiyuan (2015) advocated to increase the proportion of practical courses. Zhu Yong(2011), Liu Songhao (2013) and Cui Xiliang (2018) emphasized cultivating the academic consciousness, reflective ability, basic and applied research ability of the students of MTCSOL; Feng Liping (2009) and Zhu Yongsheng (2008) stressed the importance of focusing on pertinence, flexibility, comprehensiveness and highlighting application features in the curriculum, such as CaoYong (2017), Wang Shiping (2012) and so on.

However, how satisfied are the students of MTCSOL with the current curriculum and practical ability training? How to set up the curriculum reasonably based on the needs of students? How to link up the curriculum and the cultivation of students' practical ability? How to form effective complementarity and mutual support for the curriculum system of this major? These problems have not yet caused enough attention and are not reasonably solved. Based on the questionnaires and interviews of students in MTCSOL from five universities in Guangzhou, this paper tries to put forward some suggestions and countermeasures for MTCSOL from the perspective of curriculum design.

## **2. THE DESIGN AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **2.1 Respondents**

The respondents of this survey are Chinese students majoring in MTCSOL from five universities in Guangzhou, including Guangzhou University (GZHU), Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUOFS), South China Normal University (SCNU), Jinan University (JNU) and National Sun Yat-sen University (SYSU). The investigation process is carried out anonymously to ensure that the information gathered is authentic and valid.

Survey period: May-July 2018. The respondents of the five universities are as follows ("Table 1").

Table 1. Statistics on respondents of MTCSOL from five universities in Guangzhou

	GZHU	DUOFS	SCNU	JNU	SYSU	Rate
Grade2017	20	35	32	54	43	79.31%
Grade2016	14	2	2	13	1	13.79%
Grade2015	0	0	0	15	1	6.90%
Total	34	37	34	82	45	100%

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed. There were 248 questionnaires recalled, among which 232 questionnaires were valid. The questionnaires were sent out in both paper and electronic forms. Among them, very few respondents are graduates. Most of them are college students. That is to say, the result with a strong timeliness can truly reflect the current situation. In addition, there were 216 female students, accounting for 93.1% of the total, and only 16 male students, accounting for 6.9% of the total.

### **2.2 Survey Content**

There are 30 questions in the questionnaire, including 28 multiple choice questions, one fill-in-the-blank question and one free-response question. The content covers the basic information of the respondents (school, grade, undergraduate major, English level, etc.); the degree of satisfaction with the courses offered and the degree of recognition of MTCSOL; their future plans and suggestions.

## **3. SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The data of all valid questionnaires was analyzed by means of SPSS 24 and Excel 2011.

### **3.1 Analysis of the Characteristics of the Respondents**

#### **3.1.1 Majors of Undergraduate Period and English Proficiency**

Among the 232 respondents, 71.6% of the students majored in MTCSOL, followed by foreign language (12.5%) and Chinese language and literature (11.6%). Only 4.3% of the students came from science and engineering or other majors. In addition, the students' English level is generally high. 68.2% of them reached CET 6, 8% of them reached P4 and P8, and only 15.8% of them reached P4.

#### **3.1.2 Teaching Experience**

According to the survey, 29.3% of the respondents had a teaching experience of less than half a year, 15.4% of them had 0.5-1 year's teaching

experience, and 12.2% of them had more than one year teaching experience. That is to say, as many as 43.1% of the students lack relevant teaching experience. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the proportion of internship or practice teaching in the curriculum.

### *3.1.3 Motivation for Choosing a Major*

According to the survey, 48.2% of the students chose MTC SOL in order to obtain a graduate degree and improve their employment competitiveness, while 41.5% of them chose the major because of "interest" and "becoming a Chinese teacher". Another 8.5% of them chose the major because they wanted to "get the chance to go abroad". "Other reasons" made up for 1.8%. It can be seen that nearly half of the students blindly chose MTC SOL major because of their academic qualifications, which is not only bad for students' enthusiasm and initiative, but also bad for the long-term development of the major.

### *3.1.4 Views on Employment Prospects of Master of Science in MTC SOL*

The survey data shows that the students of MTC SOL are not optimistic about the employment prospects of their major. Only 42.9% of the students think that the major is supported by the state policy, and they intend to take up a job related to international Chinese education after graduation. 23.8% of the students indicate that they would like to work in China, even though there are more job opportunities abroad. However, the employment situation in China is serious and they want to work as Chinese teachers in primary and middle schools. 18.4% of students want to take the civil service exam or work in a training institution. It is worth noting that 9.1% of students think that the degree of social recognition about the major is not high, the job choice is limited, and only 7.8% of students have plans to continue further studies.

## *3.2 Analysis of Survey Results*

### *3.2.1 Foreign Language Courses Offered in Five Universities in Guangzhou and Satisfaction Rate of the Students*

English courses are offered by South China Normal University, Guangzhou University and National Sun Yat-sen University. South China Normal University offers English as an elective course along with Korean and Spanish. The

students who gained more than 70 in the Unified National Graduate Entrance Examination or passed CET6 may attend the exemption examination. In Guangzhou University, English is a compulsory course which is divided into two courses: "English listening and speaking" and "English reading and writing". No English courses have been offered in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and Jinan University. Guangdong University of Foreign Studies offers Korean and Spanish courses while Jinan University offers Thai and Indonesian courses.

After analyzing the correlation between the satisfaction of curriculum setting and the satisfaction of foreign language curriculum, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was found to be 0.468 and the P value of the double tail test was found to be 0.00. As a result, there was a significant correlation between them. It can be seen that every university should attach importance to the cultivation of students' foreign language ability. However, according to the survey data, the satisfaction of students majoring in MTC SOL to the foreign language courses offered by their universities is not high, and many students have expressed the hope that a compulsory English course should be added, in particular, oral language courses. The variety of foreign language courses and study time should be increased. What's more, professional language teachers should be hired instead of taking the foreign students as the foreign language teachers.

### *3.2.2 Satisfaction Degree of Link Between Curriculum and Practice of MTC SOL*

On the whole, the content of the courses offered by the universities was closely related to practice, with more than half of the students in National Sun Yat-sen University believing that the two were closely related. According to the information collected, National Sun Yat-sen University adopts the "whole-process internship training model" of "pre-job internship" and "post-job internship" to ensure that students receive practical teaching training throughout the course. In addition, "classroom observation and practice" and "microteaching" have been set up in Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, China South Normal University and National Sun Yat-sen University for one semester, mainly by simulating real classrooms. It will help students to learn the theory of effective use of knowledge in the classroom in a short time. What's more, it will enhance the

comprehensive ability of students through the practice of training.

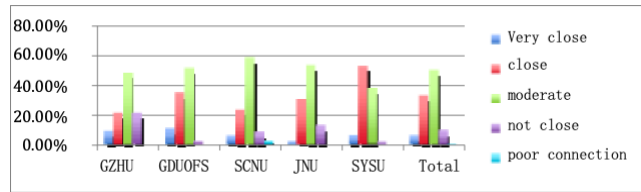


Figure 1 The degree of the link between the contents of the courses in MTCSOL and practice.

As can be seen from “Figure 1”, 83.6% of the students think that classroom observation and microteaching are very helpful or helpful to the improvement of teaching ability. Only 16.5% of the students think the effect is not so good. Of all the courses offered, 60.7% of the students believe that the practical teaching courses are the most helpful to the practical work. In analyzing the suggestions for professional improvement, more than 90% of the students said that the practical opportunities offered by the school are not enough at present. They hope the school can increase the practical courses, which offers real class observation opportunities and focuses on developing teaching skills. The practical courses are expected to be taught by experienced teachers in teaching Chinese as a second language.

### 3.2.3 The Degree of Satisfaction of Improving the Scientific Research Ability of the Students Majoring in MTCSOL

As is shown in “Figure 2”, only 30% of the students believe that the courses they have studied contributed a lot to the improvement of their scientific research ability, while more than half of the students believe that the courses partly contributed to the improvement of their scientific research ability. MTCSOL in South China Normal University offers the course of "Research Methods and thesis writing", and the National Sun Yat-sen University offers the course of "Research Design and thesis writing", the other three universities do not offer courses on scientific research.

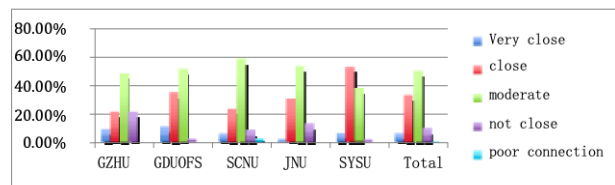


Figure 2 The degree to which the courses help to improve the ability of scientific research.

### 3.2.4 The Current Situation of the Students in MTCSOL and the Problems in the Curriculum

From the above it can be seen that the current sex ratio of students majoring in MTCSOL is extremely unbalanced. The students generally hold a negative attitude towards the prospect of professional development, which results in that more than half of the students have plans to change the profession after graduation. It does harm to the long-term promotion and development of MTCSOL. In addition, many students have great difficulties in writing their graduation theses. If they choose a research-oriented thesis, they need strong nomenclature knowledge on Chinese. However, due to some reasons, such as the limited time of academic training and weakness of professional background, the students are lack in nomenclature

knowledge of linguistics. If they prefer to write papers on teaching practice, they need plenty of practical experiences and investigation materials, but the data is difficult to obtain in China.

From the view of curriculum satisfaction, the students of MTCSOL in each university are not so satisfied with the curriculum setting. They think that the arrangement of class hours and the proportion of courses are not reasonable, and the practical courses and the practice opportunities are not enough. The teaching of language nomenclature knowledge is not in accordance with the characteristics of the major. English is not placed on a vital position, and there are not enough other foreign language courses, culture courses and Chinese talent courses.

## **4. SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

### ***4.1 The Curriculum Should Be Scientific and Reasonable***

The curriculum system needs to be supported by different courses, so as to achieve the ultimate goal of cultivating students' abilities. The objectives of cultivating students' abilities must be linked to the specific courses, otherwise, goals and capabilities are merely slogans.

The elective courses are not enough, which will limit the students' choices. Besides, it is unable to take the individual needs of students into account, and teachers cannot give full play to their research expertise. Therefore, the tutors should be encouraged to offer elective courses. The students can be provided with a variety of choices according to their career planning. What's more, measures should be taken to expand students' interdisciplinary perspective, and to cultivate students' abilities of interdisciplinary development. In addition, the accelerated teaching should be avoided in the Chinese talent courses. The students' talent skills as well as artistic cultivation should be promoted.

The core curriculum should include the language noumenon elective courses. From the survey, the students of MTC SOL come from different majors. As a result, teachers have pay more attention to language elements course as well as teaching courses and have no time to pay attention to the subject system, depth of knowledge and teaching application. This is one of the reasons why many students think some courses are not worthy of the name and the learning content is duplicated with what they have learned in the undergraduate stage. Therefore, universities may consider arranging cross-disciplinary students to take basic Chinese language courses or to audit undergraduate classes, so as to narrow the gap between students' from different professional backgrounds. In this way can universities ensure that the master's program system is in step with the undergraduate system. It is helpful for teachers to improve the theoretical depth of the curriculum.

More importance should be attached to the learning of English and other languages. Although most of volunteers from Guangzhou are sent to Southeast Asia countries, English is still widely

used in these countries. Overseas Chinese schools are mostly trilingual schools and they attach great importance to English. What's more, language learning can also develop students' second language contrast ability and broaden students' choices of work. This is a long-term process. When it comes to class hours, English and other language courses should be 4 sessions per week and last for one school year at least, otherwise the learning effect is not obvious and it is difficult to develop interest in the language.

The practical courses and the phasic training should be strengthened. From the perspective of the specific curriculum of each school, there are fewer observation and practice classes in the real sense. First, students can be arranged to enter the real classes of foreign students to learn and to make records. It can provide them with experiences of real classes for those students who have no relevant teaching experience. Then they can receive guidance on micro simulation teaching from experienced teachers. If possible, students can be provided with teaching opportunities in real class, given comprehensive training of professional skills, combined with theory and practice before graduation. Cultivating students' reflective ability and awareness of continuing learning should also be paid attention to.

### ***4.2 The Supervision of Teaching Effect, Teaching Content and the Team Building Should Be Strengthened***

More important than the curriculum is the "what to teach" and "how to teach" in each subject? What are the logical and cohesive relationships among the courses? To achieve these, the following four aspects in the curriculum teaching and the construction of teachers should be taken into consideration.

#### ***4.2.1 Teaching Procedures Need to Be Supervised***

First, the evaluation system and incentive mechanism should be improved. Experiences can also be learned from the undergraduate course management system. The course will be graded at the end of the term, and the top will be rewarded, while the bottom will be privately warned. Second, Opinions on teaching should be feedbacked to the teachers in time, so that the teachers can improve the teaching method and perfect the content in time. In addition, teachers should be required to provide a

teaching calendar or syllabus, which should be distributed to students at the beginning of the term. In this way, students can have a holistic understanding on the teaching system of the subject. Then, they can make full preparations for the teaching materials, handouts, and reading lists in advance.

#### *4.2.2 Teaching Content Needs to Be Designed and Updated*

Some instructors and students have pointed out the lack of scientific design and planning in some of the courses. First, as the teaching material is not fixed, the curriculum content is more random, and the content is too divergent, students are not easy to capture the core elements and spirit. Second, there is a lack of communication and coordination between teachers of different courses. As a result, the content is repetitive, which makes it difficult to be complementary. Third, teachers need to combine their own scientific research background with teaching content, and teach students in simple terms. Fourthly, the content of the course should be connected with and distinguished from the series of undergraduate courses, especially the course with the same name. They should be enlightening, systematic and developmental.

#### *4.2.3 Teaching Effect Needs to Be Checked*

The course that takes the course paper as the way of examination should guide the students to choose the topic as early as possible, and make use of part of the class time to answer questions or discuss the relevant questions about materials or methods, so as to improve the students' research ability. Under the condition of limited credit, it is better to "fragment" the writing instruction in the way of the course paper, and different courses are aimed at different subjects, on the contrary, it will help students enhance their innovative research consciousness and lay a good foundation for the writing of graduation thesis.

#### *4.2.4 The Construction of Curriculum Team Is Imminent*

At present, most of the courses are taught by teachers separately. How to give full play to the teacher's personality and give consideration to the commonness of the curriculum? It's not easy to solve the problem. Therefore, regular sharing sessions and teaching seminars can be held among

instructors to build up the teaching team. Each course is taught by team members in turn or by both the lead teacher and the assistant teacher, so as to enhance the difference and effect of the course, students can also experience different teaching methods and styles, and expand the scope of academic research.

#### *4.2.5 Transition from Input Class to Elicitation Class*

The survey shows that more than 90% of students think that 20-30 class size is more suitable and will be more conducive to the heuristic teaching mode. While teaching, the overall teaching and the development of students' personality should be taken into account. As a result, in the case of a large number of students, the classified method can be adopted. In the teaching process, measures should be taken to reduce knowledge instillation, enhance the participation of students, increase the guidance, and innovative thinking ability.

### ***4.3 The Quality As Well As the Management of the Cultivation Should Be Improved and Teaching Skills and Scientific Research Ability Should Be Strengthened***

The qualified graduates should have strong professional practice ability, scientific research ability and professional development ability. Attention should be paid to how to improve the core competitiveness in the limited training time. In addition, it is very important to make out the standards on admission and graduation.

#### *4.3.1 Enrollment Methods*

When it comes to enrollment, measures should be taken to integrate and optimize the quality of students, and to publicize the superiority, development prospect and school-running features of MTCSOL by using various platforms. The written examination can be decreased for the exemption students. But for the unified examinees who have already passed the strict written examination, the second-round examination part should give priority to the interview. The interview questions should be designed to test the divergent thinking, the comprehensive ability and the professional potential.

### 4.3.2 *The Practice Should Be Strengthened*

In order to strengthen the practice from the beginning of the school year, the "dual tutorial system" of academic tutors and practical tutors can be introduced. In the first semester of the first grade, every student will be guided with a practical tutor with abundant teaching experiences. Working as a teaching assistant, the students are exposed to the practice of Chinese teaching. In the second semester of the first grade, teachers and students choose each other according to the students' research interest and the selection of thesis topic. In this way, the student will be guided by an academic tutor while writing thesis.

In addition, in order to strengthen the training of practical teaching skills, "Language Clinic" project can be developed in small groups to provide a platform for cross-cultural communication between students of MTC SOL and foreign students. It will strengthen the connection between them. What's more, it will promote the students of MTC SOL to join the foreign students' project on homework and thesis guidance. The students can find problems in the project and bring the problems back to the classroom which can be discussed with teachers. Finally, the experience sharing meetings given by overseas volunteers can provide the students with a lot of useful information overseas.

### 4.3.3 *Students Should Be Cultivated with the Research Ability of Theory and Application*

Not only should professional teachers be trained, but also students should be cultivated with the research ability of theory and application, which is the basic ability that all graduates should possess. The students should be promoted to participate in academic activities. In addition, courses in research methods and thesis writing should be offered to develop students' scientific research potential. Thesis writing should be problem-oriented. The students should be encouraged to accumulate materials in practice to solve practical problems. Every link of thesis including topic selection and thesis defense should be strictly controlled. Only in this way can we improve the quality of the thesis and the professional quality of the students.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of questionnaires and interviews conducted among the students of

MTC SOL in five universities in Guangzhou, this paper puts forward a series of suggestions on counter measures for the curriculum setting and training objectives of this major. In this way, MTC SOL can better meet the needs of the development of international Chinese education. With the help of modern educational technology and means, a new type of Chinese international education talents who can combine humanistic thinking with scientific spirit and have a sense of mission and responsibility can be cultivated. MTC SOL will try to adapt to the actual needs of the current domestic and overseas markets, open up the employment channels of the major, and broaden the employment of the major.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Yanjun Wang is responsible for experimental design and data collection, Xindan Hu analysed data and wrote the manuscript.

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