



Research on the Current Situation of French Language Teaching in Chinese University Education

Wentao Lin

College of Foreign Languages, Zhejiang Normal University, Jinhua, China

Email: 1339569588@qq.com

How to cite this paper: Lin, W.T. (2024) Research on the Current Situation of French Language Teaching in Chinese University Education. *Open Access Library Journal*, 11: e12639.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1112639>

Received: November 16, 2024

Accepted: December 8, 2024

Published: December 11, 2024

Copyright © 2024 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

With the deepening cooperation between China and Francophone countries in economic, cultural, and educational fields, French has become increasingly prominent as an important second foreign language in Chinese higher education. Based on an investigation and analysis of the current situation of French language teaching in Chinese universities, this paper explores the strengths and weaknesses of the current French education system and proposes feasible suggestions for future reform directions. The study finds that although Chinese French education has made significant progress in curriculum design, faculty development, and other aspects, it still faces challenges such as a lack of teaching method diversity, weak actual language proficiency among students, and inadequate cross-cultural education. To address these issues, this paper proposes a series of countermeasures, including strengthening language practice, innovating teaching modes, and promoting cross-cultural training for teachers, to drive the sustainable development of French language education in Chinese universities.

Subject Areas

Linguistics

Keywords

Chinese Universities, French Language Teaching, Current Situation Analysis, Educational Reform, Cross-Cultural Education

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

With the advancement of globalization and China's "Going Out" strategy, economic

and cultural cooperation between China and Francophone countries has gradually deepened, making French education an important part of China's foreign cultural exchanges. In this context, the quality and effectiveness of French language teaching not only affect China's academic understanding of Francophone countries but also, to a certain extent, influence the depth of Sino-French cultural and economic exchanges.

French education in China started relatively late but has made significant progress in recent years. Since the deepening of reform and opening up in the 1990s, French has gradually become one of the main contents of foreign language education in middle schools and universities, especially in large and medium-sized cities where the quality and influence of French education have gradually improved. However, the development of French education in Chinese higher education institutions still faces many challenges, particularly in resource allocation, teaching method innovation, and cross-cultural literacy cultivation.

1.2. Research Objectives and Significance

This paper aims to conduct a detailed investigation and analysis of the current situation of French language teaching in Chinese universities, reveal the existing problems and deficiencies, and propose practical improvement strategies based on relevant domestic and international research and successful cases. The research aims to provide a theoretical basis for the further development of French education, improve teaching quality, and promote the deep integration of French education and Sino-French cultural exchanges.

1.3. Research Methods

This study employed a comprehensive research approach, integrating literature analysis, online questionnaire surveys, and individual interviews. To ensure broad accessibility and convenience, the questionnaire was conducted online, gathering feedback from 500 samples across 15 universities in diverse regions of China, encompassing both key institutions and local universities. The sampling strategy combined random and targeted approaches to capture a wide range of student and teacher demographics. Additionally, extensive literature related to French education was analyzed to summarize the development trajectory and future trends of French language teaching.

Through these questionnaires and interviews, in-depth insights into the issues and needs within French language education were obtained from both teachers and students. This feedback, combined with a thorough literature review and case analysis, allowed for the formulation of specific proposals aimed at teaching reform and improvement. However, it is important to acknowledge that, despite efforts to ensure representativeness, the concentration of responses from specific universities may still somewhat limit the generalizability of the findings to the entire French education system in China.

2. Current Situation Analysis of French Education in Chinese Universities

2.1. Historical Development of French Education

The history of French education in China is relatively short, dating back to the early 20th century. Due to the close diplomatic relations between China and France at that time, French was taught in some universities. However, it was not until after the reform and opening up that French education entered the mainstream of China's education system. In the late 1980s, French was officially included in China's foreign language professional education system, and relevant majors were established in various universities [1].

Entering the 21st century, with the increasing frequency of Sino-French cultural exchanges, French education has gradually been incorporated into the curriculum system of more universities. Especially under the "Belt and Road" initiative, French has become one of the important languages for cooperation with Africa and Francophone countries. More and more universities in China are offering French majors or courses, and the French education system is gradually improving. Currently, French is among the most popular foreign languages after English in Chinese universities, with an estimated 60,000 - 80,000 students studying it as their second foreign language. While French enjoys significant popularity, other languages such as Japanese and Korean may rival it in some regions or institutions. However, with the increase in the number of French learners, how to improve teaching quality and enable students to effectively apply French has become an urgent issue to be addressed.

2.2. Curriculum Design of French Education

The curriculum design of French language teaching in Chinese universities is roughly divided into three levels:

Basic Language Courses: These courses mainly include grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, and other foundational knowledge, aiming to lay a solid language foundation for students. Although these courses provide students with the basic framework of language skills, they often neglect the practical application of the language due to their focus on grammar and vocabulary.

Language Application Courses: As students' language proficiency improves, senior students will be exposed to application courses such as translation, writing, and business French. These courses aim to help students improve their ability to use French in real life and work, especially in business and diplomatic fields.

Cultural Courses: French education not only focuses on language teaching but also includes cultural courses on the history, society, literature, and art of France and other Francophone countries. These courses help students better understand the cultural connotations behind the language and improve their cross-cultural communication skills.

Although these curriculum systems are relatively well-established, the course content mostly remains in traditional language learning modes, lacking innovation

and interactivity. Some schools have opened language practice courses, but the curriculum is outdated and fails to fully leverage the role of cross-cultural education.

2.3. Faculty Strength of French Education

The faculty strength of French education is a key factor affecting teaching quality. Currently, most French teachers in Chinese universities hold master's degrees or higher, and many have overseas study experiences, possessing high academic qualities. However, despite the generally high educational background of French teachers, some still have deficiencies in teaching methods and classroom management in terms of teaching effectiveness.

Teachers' cross-cultural literacy is also a relatively weak link in current French education. Although French teachers are proficient in language skills, many lack deep understanding and practice in cultural teaching, failing to effectively combine cultural backgrounds with language teaching, resulting in students' weak cross-cultural communication skills [2].

Furthermore, the proportion of foreign teachers in Chinese French language teaching is relatively low, especially in small and medium-sized institutions where the number of foreign teachers is limited. Foreign teachers can provide students with a richer language environment and cultural background, so their role in French education cannot be ignored.

2.4. Teaching Methods and Means of French Education

Currently, French language teaching in Chinese universities mainly adopts the traditional classroom lecture mode. This mode emphasizes grammar explanation and language structure learning but neglects the cultivation of students' practical language application abilities. Especially the training of speaking and listening is often overlooked in traditional teaching methods [3].

With the advancement of information technology, some universities have begun to introduce modern teaching tools such as multimedia and online platforms, attempting to expand learning channels through online learning, virtual classrooms, and other forms. However, the use of these emerging technologies is still limited to a few schools, and many universities have not yet effectively utilized modern teaching tools, resulting in the singularity and traditionality of teaching methods not being fundamentally broken.

2.5. Issues and Challenges in French Education

Some prominent issues facing Chinese French education include:

Insufficient student motivation: Many French language students lack strong motivation, especially non-foreign language majors who often treat French as a supplementary subject and lack interest and long-term planning for French learning.

Single teaching content and methods: Most current French courses still focus

on grammar, neglecting students' practical application abilities and cross-cultural communication skills [4].

Faculty shortage and imbalance: Faculty construction urgently needs to be strengthened, especially in some local universities that lack French teachers with international perspectives and rich teaching experience.

Insufficient teaching resources: Some universities lack sufficient teaching resources, especially in remote areas and local universities where teaching facilities and technical support for French education are limited.

3. Successful Experiences and Case Studies of French Education Reform

3.1. Successful Cases of Domestic French Education

Shanghai International Studies University is one of the leading universities in Chinese French education. Its French teaching emphasizes practice and interaction, enhancing students' practical language skills by organizing activities such as translation competitions and foreign language corners. Additionally, the university has established close academic cooperation relationships with French universities, offering exchange programs that provide students with more international exchange opportunities.

The French major curriculum system at Beijing Foreign Studies University is also recognized by scholars both domestically and internationally. The university not only focuses on language education but also offers many cross-cultural communication courses aimed at improving students' cross-cultural awareness and global perspective. Through the "cultural immersion" approach, language learning is deeply integrated with French culture, enabling students to better understand the culture behind the French language.

3.2. The Applicability of Successful Practices in Resource-Constrained Universities

Resource-constrained universities, such as Nanjing Normal University Zhongbei College, may face challenges when attempting to directly replicate the practices of institutions like Sichuan International Studies University (SISU) and Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU). However, they have still adopted some successful strategies: partnering with online language learning platforms like Duolingo or LinguaTV to bridge resource gaps through digital solutions; collaborating with French-speaking universities on virtual cultural exchange programs that provide exposure opportunities with lower financial investments; and establishing local French language clubs, inviting foreign exchange students or diplomats to create low-cost, immersive learning experiences through community-based learning [5].

3.3. Reform Attempts in French Education

In recent years, many universities have begun to introduce task-based teaching methods and project-based learning into French classrooms. By simulating actual

work scenarios such as business negotiations and international conferences, students can practice language skills in the classroom, enhancing their language application abilities and teamwork skills. At the same time, universities encourage students to participate in international volunteer programs or study in France to strengthen their practical language skills and cultural adaptation abilities.

4. Strategies and Suggestions for Optimizing French Education

4.1. Reforming Teaching Methods to Promote Interactive and Practical Teaching

In response to the current singularity in French language teaching, it is recommended to reform existing teaching methods and adopt more interactive and practical teaching approaches. For example, by combining task-based teaching methods with group cooperation, role-playing, and case analysis, students can apply French in practical situations, improving their actual language application abilities.

4.2. Strengthening Cross-Cultural Education to Cultivate Internationally Competitive Talents

French teaching should not only focus on language learning but also emphasize the cultivation of cross-cultural education. Teachers can enhance students' cultural literacy and cross-cultural communication skills by introducing the culture, history, art, and other aspects of France and other French-speaking countries. Furthermore, schools should increase international exchange programs, providing students with more opportunities to directly interact with students from French-speaking countries and broaden their international horizons.

4.3. Improving Teacher Development to Elevate Teachers' Professional Competence

The teaching ability and cross-cultural competence of French teachers are of utmost importance. Schools should enhance teachers' teaching abilities and academic levels through regular teacher training and international academic exchanges. Particularly, teachers should be encouraged to pursue further studies abroad to enhance their cultural adaptability and cross-cultural educational capabilities.

4.4. Enriching Teaching Resources to Enhance Teaching Effectiveness

Universities should increase resource investment in French teaching, especially in universities located away from major cities. With support from government funds and social forces, they should upgrade facilities and equipment for French education. Additionally, online learning platforms can be utilized to compensate for the shortcomings of offline teaching and provide students with more opportunities for autonomous learning.

4.5. Establishing a School-Enterprise Cooperation Mechanism to Expand Practical Platforms

To enhance students' practical French skills and employment competitiveness, universities can establish partnerships with French-related companies or institutions to jointly build practical platforms. For example, they can collaborate with enterprises to launch French translation, interpretation, and other internship programs, allowing students to hone their language skills in real-world work environments. Additionally, they can invite industry representatives to give lectures or workshops on campus, keeping students informed about the latest trends and talent demands in the French language industry.

5. Conclusion

While Chinese university French education is rapidly developing, it faces numerous challenges. By reforming teaching methods, strengthening cross-cultural education, enhancing the quality of teachers, and enriching teaching resources, French education is poised for a more comprehensive and in-depth development. Only by continuously adapting to the demands of globalization and internationalization, and cultivating French talents with both language skills and an international perspective, can China occupy a more significant position in global cultural exchanges.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Jin, J.F. and Zhang, H. (2024) A Study on the Integration of Literature in Advanced Original French Textbooks: Based on the Le Nouveau sans frontières and Tendances Series from CLE 2International Publishing House. *Foreign Language Teaching Materials Research*, 97-112.
- [2] Wang, R. (2022) An Analysis of French Teaching Strategies from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 5, 147-149.
- [3] Zhang, Q. and Li, Y. (2023) Exploration of Multi-Dimensional Infiltration Teaching in the Basic French Stage. *Jiangsu Foreign Language Teaching Research*, No. 2, 41-44.
- [4] Wu, Y. (2022) A Study on the Errors in French Pronunciation Recognition among Chinese College Students. *Research on French Language Teaching in China*, 113-129.
- [5] Yang, Q. (2023) The Practice of Applying the Production-Oriented Approach in College French at Local Applied Universities. *Journal of Learning*, 20, 3-5.