

Research on the Investigation of Current Situation of Chinese Credit Courses in the Confucius Class in Maramureş , Romania

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Abstract

Maramureş is the largest number of enrollment in Chinese credit courses in public elementary and secondary schools in Romania. This paper investigates and analyzes the current situation of Chinese credit course in Confucius Class in Maramureş in such aspects as curriculum, students, teachers, teaching resources and class teaching. This paper points out that there are such problems in the current implementation of Chinese credit courses as single course types, high mobility of Chinese teachers, and weakening of learners' interest in learning. On that basis, it proposes corresponding suggestions for improvement and coping strategies. It thus aims to improve the quality of credit Chinese courses. At the same time, this paper hopes to help learners, teachers, and researchers have a basic understanding of the actual situation of the credit Chinese courses in the Confucius Class in Maramureş , and provide a reference for subsequent teaching by Chinese teachers.

Keywords

Romania; Credit Course; Chinese Teaching.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the international Chinese education in Romania has shown rapid development. So far, a total of four Confucius Institutes have been established there, with multiple Confucius Classes in important cities throughout the country. In 2017, as shown by a document signed by Chinese Embassy to Romania and Romanian Ministry of Education, Chinese has been officially included in the national education system of elementary and secondary schools as a second foreign language.

In addition to providing Chinese degree education based on the Chinese major in local universities, the Institute is more important to carry out Chinese language education and promotion for local young students. To young students who are in a critical stage of their lives, teaching and promoting Chinese language, thus helping them experience Chinese culture and understand the cultural differences between the East and the West, can have an important influence on their life planning. The Confucius Institute provides multiple types of Chinese courses, including credit courses, interest courses and courses for Chinese culture experience, among which credit courses are particularly important, where students, out of their own will, choose Chinese as a compulsive course of a second foreign language.

In 2017, the Cluj Confucius Institute opened two credit classes and two interest classes in Colegiul National "Gheorghe Sincai" Baia Mare. And various types of credit classes, interest classes and adult classes have been open in 10 school in the Baia Mare and Sighetu Marmătiei. In October 2019, the application of the Cluj Confucius Institute to establish Confucius Class was formally replied by Hanban, thus the Chinese teaching and promotion in Maramureş ushered in new development.

As of June, 2021, there are a total of 164 students in the Confucius Class in Maramureş, 87 of whom being elementary and secondary school students studying credit courses of Chinese. In

addition, it has shown a growing trend year by year, making it the region in Romania with the largest number of enrollment for credit Chinese courses in public elementary and secondary schools among the four Confucius Institutes throughout the country.

After years of development, certain achievements have been made in the teaching of credit Chinese courses in Maramureş. But the process of Chinese teaching and promotion has also seen the accumulation of some problems. This paper aims to investigate and analyze the teaching of credit Chinese courses in Maramureş in such aspects s curriculum, students, teachers, teaching resources, etc., point out the current challenges it faces, and put forward corresponding suggestions for improvement. It thus hopes to improve the quality of the credit Chinese courses provided in the Confucius Class in Maramureş. At the same time, this paper hopes to help learners, teachers, and researchers have a basic understanding of the actual situation of the credit Chinese courses in the Confucius Classroom of Maramureş, and provide a reference for subsequent teaching by Chinese teachers.

2. Investigation of the Credit Chinese Courses in Confucius Class in Maramureş

2.1. Curriculum

As of June 2021, the Cluj Confucius Institute has offered credit Chinese courses for 5 grades in 4 schools in the Baia Mare and Sighetu Marmăţiei regions in the Maramureş .

Credit Chinese courses cover a wide range of grades. From grade 6 to grade 11, students choose Chinese as a second foreign language for 2 class hours per week. Chinese teachers divide students into different classes according to their learning time limit and Chinese proficiency. The type of class is a comprehensive class, and listening class, reading class, speaking class, etc. are not offered separately. Teachers arrange Chinese cultural experience activities in the classroom, such as calligraphy, paper-cutting, etc., introduce traditional Chinese festivals, food, Chinese movies, etc., so as to combine cultural experience with language teaching and help the students have a deeper understanding of Chinese culture.

2.2. Students

As of June 2021, there are 87 students enrolled for credit Chinese courses.

Among the 87 students, 47 are girls and 40 are boys, girls being more than boys. At the same time, according to the author's observation in teaching practice, most girls have better academic performance than boys, and girls show advantages in Chinese spelling, listening, and grammar exercise. However, most students have poor Chinese writing ability.

Most students are aged between 14 and 17, being in a critical period of youth development. Whether in terms of mental maturity, knowledge understanding, and hands-on operations, middle school students are better than infants and elementary school students. At the same time, middle school students show advantages over adults in the acquisition of Chinese pronunciation.

These students use Romanian as their mother tongue and have a certain foundation in English. 43% of the students have the experience of learning two or more foreign languages, such as English, French or German. Since 2017, Romanian high school students can choose Chinese as the second foreign language in the graduation exams. Every year, many students pass the HSK test, and some of them participate in the Chinese Bridge competition and go to China to participate in such activities as summer camps.

2.3. Teachers

The Cluj Confucius Institute selects two to three volunteer Chinese teachers to teach in the Confucius Classr in Maramureş every year. These volunteer Chinese teachers are selected by

Hanban, and after being interviewed by the Chinese and foreign deans of the Confucius Institute, they are sent to the teaching sites to teach Chinese. From 2017 to 2020, the Confucius Classroom has changed three batches of Chinese teachers, a total of 8, showing a high mobility of Chinese teachers.

Among the three batches of volunteer Chinese teachers, there are 2 boys and 6 girls. The Chinese teachers for the credit classes are all with Master's Degree of Chinese International Education in China, thus having advantages in professional knowledge and teaching ability, and all of them have passed CET-6 and have relatively fluent English communication skills. Before the volunteer Chinese teachers took up their posts, Hanban provided training of Romanian language so that they could master simple Romanian, and give simple instructions in Romanian in their teaching work and daily life. Currently, there are no Romanian native Chinese teachers in the Confucius Class in Maramureș.

2.4. Teaching Resources

The Cluj Confucius Institute has a special Chinese library, with a sufficient number and rich types of Chinese books. In the Chinese class of the Confucius Classroom, there are special bookcases for storing Chinese textbooks for students to read. The Chinese classrooms in all schools are equipped with projectors, computers, televisions and other multimedia equipment. If large-scale Chinese cultural activities are to be held, schools will provide venues and give some support.

Currently, credit classes in middle schools use the "HSK Standard Course" as teaching materials. The "HSK Standard Course" is a new series of Chinese textbooks with the HSK test outline as the outline, which embodies the characteristics of "combination of examination and teaching", "promoting teaching with examination" and "promoting learning with examination". Each lesson in the textbook includes warm-up, text (including new words), notes, exercises, phonetics, Chinese characters, and application, and each textbook is equipped with a corresponding exercise book.

At the same time, the Confucius Institute provides Confucius Classrooms with such extracurricular resources as Chinese language teaching wall charts, cultural CDs and books, as well as traditional Chinese crafts such as Tai Chi fans, shuttlecocks, lanterns, and Chinese knots.

2.5. Classroom Teaching

The cooperating schools will designate a foreign language teacher to be responsible for liaison and communication with Chinese teachers, promptly notify the arrangements of the school, and assist in the Chinese classes, but is not responsible for specific Chinese teaching. Chinese teachers independently organize and complete Chinese teaching.

The Chinese class at this stage is a comprehensive course for the preliminary stage. Chinese teachers adopt different teaching methods according to students' Chinese levels and ages, combining Chinese culture with language learning. English and Chinese are the most commonly used languages in the classroom. In the actual teaching process, teachers often use such teaching methods as grammar translation method, situational method, and intuitive method. For all links of classroom teaching, PPT and relevant teaching materials will be prepared. After class, the teachers will assign a little homework. Students' classroom performance and homework completion will be considered in their routine assessment.

In classroom teaching, students can understand the teaching instructions of the teachers. The classroom performance of elementary and junior high school students is more active than that of high school students. However, most students cannot consciously output Chinese language, lacking subjective initiative, and show fear of difficulty in Chinese output and expression. In terms of teaching content, students are interested in Chinese culture, especially primary school students like cultural activities that require hands-on manipulation. In terms of weekly class

hours and teaching plans, Chinese teachers must not only satisfy students' interest in learning, but also complete relevant language teaching tasks. Therefore, improving the efficiency has become a key issue in classroom teaching.

3. Suggestions for the Development of Credit Chinese Courses in the Confucius Class in Maramureş

3.1. To Improve the Curriculum

The current Chinese credit courses have such problems as single types and few class hours. Chinese classes are comprehensive ones, and each class contains a lot of knowledge, making students' burdens heavier, and forcing students to spend a lot of time digesting the content of the course. At the same time, there is a lack of specialized language skills courses. Students show a strong dependence on Pinyin, their actual oral expression performance of Chinese is not ideal, and the writing of Chinese characters is an even greater challenge to them. The actual Chinese level of most students is lower than expected. The curriculum is not targeted enough, and long-term comprehensive course teaching is not conducive to the improvement of students' Chinese proficiency. There are limited class hours for Chinese, and students do not have the opportunity to use Chinese after class. Every week, students only have 2 class hours to communicate and study with Chinese teachers, which also means that students can only learn basic knowledge, hindering their long-term development.

Chinese teachers should attach importance to students' language learning and cultural experience, and based on the comprehensive courses, diversified Chinese language courses. For example, Chinese specific skills courses, Brief Chinese history introduction, Visiting the famous Chinese Historical sites, Chinese Literature introduction, modern popular culture courses and other innovative courses.

Through a series of activities with multiple themes, local students have more opportunities to learn about Chinese culture with rich content and various forms in an all-round and in-depth manner.

At the same time, the number of class hours should be increased to ensure that learners have enough time to learn and practice Chinese for better Chinese teaching.

Teachers should update the teaching content and show more interesting Chinese popular and widely used in China, so as to fit the characteristics of young students' pursuit of freshness, stimulate students' interest in learning, increase their participation, and give full consideration to the learning needs of local students.

3.2. To Develop Local Textbooks and Cultivate Local Chinese Teachers

At present, there a variety of Chinese textbooks in Romania, but each has its own advantages and disadvantages. There is a lack of localized Chinese textbooks and the content of the textbooks are obsolete and rigid, making it difficult for them to meet the new needs of Chinese learners.

The Confucius Institutes should strengthen cooperation, and Chinese and foreign Chinese teachers should strengthen exchanges, base themselves on the characteristics and needs of Romanian learners, and design, compile and formulate localized Chinese textbooks aiming to meet the learning needs of local learners. The textbooks should form a knowledge network as a whole, while maintaining the systematic content of the textbooks, they should be connected and supplemented with the series of textbooks directly related to one another. At the same time, importance should be attached to the development of teaching materials for cultural introduction, thus enriching the functions of Chinese teaching materials, enhancing the interest of local Chinese learners, stimulating their learning initiative, and narrowing the distance between them and the Chinese language and culture.

At the same time, we should actively cultivate Romanian Chinese teachers. First of all, these local Chinese teachers have no language barriers and are more familiar with students' learning and growth experience and value perception, which is conducive to communicating with students. Training of local teachers can be held regularly to improve teachers' teaching level, activity planning and organization ability, and mastery of Chinese arts. Training activities are not limited to pre-job training, on-job training, and special training. The remuneration of local teachers should be improved, thus building a long-term and stable team of Chinese and foreign Chinese teachers.

3.3. To Stabilize the Teaching Forces and Provide Training for Teachers

The Chinese teachers are relatively young on the whole and do not have extensive overseas teaching experience, and their teaching level needs to be improved. Moreover, Chinese teachers are highly mobile, which seriously affects the continuity of students' Chinese learning. Therefore, this paper hopes that publicly-sponsored teachers with a relatively long tenure should be selected and sent. The Hanban and the Confucius Institute should improve relevant systems to provide support and protection for volunteer Chinese teachers, reduce their mobility, improve their stability, and cultivate long-term, targeted local teachers. The stability of the teachers is an effective measure to reduce the loss of students and a strong guarantee for the sustainable development of Chinese teaching.

The Confucius Institute should actively provide training for Chinese teachers. Chinese teachers should actively participate in various forms of vocational training, so as to adapt to the changing teaching environment, understand learners' new language learning needs, make full use of teaching resources, rational use of teaching methods, and promote the classroom. The improvement of teaching quality and continuous improvement of teaching ability through self-evaluation and peer evaluation, reflection and improvement of teaching plans and teaching arrangements.

3.4. To Enrich Teaching Methods and Improve Teaching Capacity

In the current Chinese teaching, the teaching methods adopted by most Chinese teachers are grammar translation and situational method. The teaching methods are rigid and the practice activities are mechanical, making the model of classroom teaching relatively boring.

Chinese teachers should improve classroom efficiency, manage the classroom well, improve the attendance system, and formulate reward and punishment measures.

At the same time, teachers should improve the traditional teaching model, innovate teaching methods, rationally design classroom activities, so as to fully mobilize the enthusiasm of students, and arrange interesting teaching tasks with students as the subject. Teachers should make good use of multimedia resources, carry out network interactive exercises, and design teaching games that conform to the teaching plan and the characteristics of the students. Teachers should improve students' interest in learning Chinese, create more opportunities for them to practice Chinese, and enable them to confidently and consciously output Chinese. After class, teachers can share some high-quality video materials that students are interested in.

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