



English Language Education in the Mainland of China: A Review of Selected Research under the COVID-19 Pandemic (2020-2021)

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Abstract

This paper focuses on three aspects of research: the new features of language policy and planning for students learning English in the mainland of China, problems in the compilation of English teaching textbooks, and new challenges for teachers and students in online teaching, and also points out what needs to be paid attention to: Sino-English (Chinese people's English Language) should first be positively accepted by Chinese people, as a manifestation of China's soft power.

Subject Areas

Language Education

Keywords

COVID-19 Pandemic, English Education, English Teaching Textbooks, Soft Power

1. Introduction

The cause of the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet known, but its damage to the entire course of human civilization is indeed significant and permanent. It is also important to note that the impact on education may not be felt for many years to come. According to relevant data, as of 14 December 2020, in less than a year, the Novel Corona-virus has disrupted the lives of more than 7 billion people worldwide, infected more than 70 million people and claimed more than 1.6 million lives [1]. In the field of education, as of May 2020, 1.56 billion students had been

suspended from school due to school closures, and 63 million teachers had been affected by COVID-19 [2]. Zhang Minxuan (2021) had mentioned above [3].

Although COVID-19 has also had a huge impact on China, it is important to emphasize that the epidemic has likewise provided an opportunity for the transformation of education methods in China. Though it was forced, with the technical support of technology companies and education companies, the transformation from traditional teaching to streaming media teaching has been realized. This would have been unthinkable during the SARS pandemic of 2002-2003. The reality is that after years of economic development, China has become strong in Internet communication and the population of smartphone ownership, the total number of colleges and universities and the number of English teaching students. Therefore, it is necessary to pay more attention to the use and application of English to solve production problems and practical problems, for example, promote learning Li Ziqi's food video, and promote Chinese food in Chinese English.

2. Journal Selected

Use the keyword search program to search CNKI. The search criteria are as follows: 2020-2021.

First, search CNKI online for keywords: "COVID-19", "Corona-virus" and "pandemic" in the title of the article.

Second, add "English" keywords: "COVID-19" + "English"; Corona-virus + English; pandemic + English.

By December 31, 2021, 49 overlapping papers were obtained after deletion. (for details see attached **Table A1** at the appendix) Six key categories: journalism and communication (4), medical education (4), English education (33), Emergency English service (1), ship navigation (2), and ideological and political education (5) (see attached **Table 1**). The limitation of this study is that the database source is single, such as Wanfang database, are not covered. In addition, *i.e.* the technical operation of education is not involved.

This paper highlights on college English education. First, the survey covers a wide range of online and offline teaching, covering universities in most provinces across mainland China. The second is to analyze the new teaching mode: relying on online teaching technology to carry out teaching in the context of the epidemic; It also stresses on the challenges of online classroom teaching.

Table 1. Research direction classification of 49 Chinese Journal articles on English education from 2020-2021 by CNKI.

No.	CATEGORIES OF PAPERS	TOTAL NUMBER
1	News communication	4
2	Medical Education	4
3	English Education	33
4	Emergency English services	1
5	Ship Navigation	2
6	Ideological and Political Education	5

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1. Findings

This study analyzes the influential status of these journals in the industry, their funding sources, and the status of the related disciplines, universities and research institutions in mainland China. At the same time, this paper told on three aspects of English teaching in this country: national foreign language policy, teaching materials and teacher-student interaction.

Journal sources: The journals involved are all ordinary journals with limited influence, and the key Chinese social science journals are few.

Funding sources: There are only 3 national projects funded, and 15 papers are provincial projects (see attached **Table 2**).

Table 2. List of major funding providers for CNKI Journal articles on English education in China in 2020-2021.

No.	FUNDING SOURCE	TOTAL NUMBER	LEVELS
1	National Education Information Technology Research project	1	national
2	Standardization of Traditional Chinese medicine by state Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine	1	national
3	Humanities and Social Science Research Project of Ministry of Education	1	national
4	Heilongjiang Province education science planning project	3	provincial
5	Humanities and Social Science research of Anhui Education Department	2	provincial
6	Shandong University of Science and Technology education research project	1	provincial
7	Hainan Province Education science planning project	1	provincial
8	Shandong Province higher Education reform research project	1	provincial
9	Teaching quality and Teaching Reform in Guangxi Colleges and universities	1	provincial
10	Education science planning project of Hubei Province	1	provincial
11	Heilongjiang Province philosophy and Social Science research plan	1	provincial
12	Research on humanities and Social Sciences in Hebei Province	1	provincial
13	Education science planning project of Shandong Province	1	provincial
14	Hubei Province Philosophy and Social Science planning project	1	provincial
15	Provincial teaching research project of Anhui Colleges and universities	1	provincial

Research level (9): Basic Research (Social Sciences) (29) Industry Guidance (Social Sciences) (13) Basic education and Secondary Vocational Education (12) Higher Education (2) Policy Research (Social Sciences) (2) Popular Culture (1) Career Guidance (Social Sciences) (1) Engineering technology (Natural Science) (1) Basic and Applied basic Research (Natural Science) (1) (see attached **Table 3**).

Scientific research institutions: mainly ordinary universities, almost no key universities.

Problems: Lack of vertical links between universities.

3.2. Discussions

1) The policy goal of English education in mainland China is to serve the modernization of the land to develop hard power and soft power.

In terms of hard power construction of English education, China's general universities and vocational and technical universities are still the main sectors to train high-quality technical staff in society. Therefore, the government attaches great importance to students' Applied English education.

Soft power construction in English education: To explain China's development and change using English, this is soft power. English academic language and English common language with Oriental cultural characteristics should become the main development direction of the local English language used by Chinese people.

College English education in mainland China should establish the Chinese nation's own English discourse communication system. Establish "one goal" and "two paths". One goal is for China to be culturally confident, with the aim of establishing Sino-English. There are two ways: stick to public English and academic English. Efforts should be made to expand the basic English communication ability of ordinary people and actively expand the influence of China Academic English. In fact, the socialization reform of College Entrance Examination

Table 3. Research direction list of Chinese Journal articles on English education in 2020-2021.

No.	LEVELS OF RESEARCHES	TOTAL NUMBER
1	Basic Studies (Social Sciences)	29
2	Industry Guidance (Social Sciences)	13
3	Basic education and secondary vocational education	12
4	Higher education	2
5	Policy Studies (Social Sciences)	2
6	Mass culture	1
7	Career Guidance (Social Sciences)	1
8	Engineering Technology (Natural Science)	1
9	Basic and Applied Basic Research (Natural Sciences)	1

English is a good start, at present.

In the application of social English. There is a gap between our English proficiency and that of our neighbors (such as India) in some aspects. This is not consistent with the proportion of China's international economic scale. In contrast, countries with smaller economies, the Philippines has its own Version of Filipino English. We must recognize that Sino-English, or the English spoken by the Chinese people, must be consistent with the economic status of the country in the world.

2) The technical platform for English education in mainland China have been built.

Change from traditional teaching to streaming media teaching has been happening. The Sino-English communication technology platform has matured. At present, English education in the epidemic situation, the main need to solve the non-technical issues. For example, according to the 48th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development, the number of Mobile phone users in China has exceeded 1 billion, and technical and hardware problems have been basically solved [4]. CAI Jigang (2020) said that English teaching in colleges and universities is mainly about the technical literacy of teachers and students, compared with hardware and technical support [5].

3) the evaluation method of English education in China should be more inclined to adopt Chinese people's life practice.

English education should learn the documentary form of "A Bite of China", represent the soft power of Chinese culture with vivid video files, and take the route of combining with commercialization rather than relying solely on government education funds. Let the English cultural products with Oriental characteristics occupy the International English language market and international consumers. And let social practice and business activities test educational results.

4. The Development and Change of Foreign Language Policy

English education in mainland China always serves the overall construction of the nation. Since the reform and opening up, the state has issued four programmatic documents to guide the national education work, including English education. At the same time, national education authorities have given more autonomy to English teaching.

Foreign language policy: Four programmatic documents on education issued by China since the reform and opening up: They include the Decision of the CPC Central Committee on The Reform of the Education System (1985), The Outline of China's Education Reform and Development (1993), the Outline of the National Medium and Long-term Plan for Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), and China's Education Modernization 2035 (2019) [6]. Among them, "China's Education Modernization 2035" emphasis on ten strategic tasks for education modernization, one of which is "promoting the modernization of education governance system and governance capacity". "Overall

planning, regional promotion”, this has put forward new tasks and requirements for the modernization of governance capacity and system of governments, schools, social organizations and communities at all levels, but also brought historical and systemic challenges. The development goal of “forming a new pattern of education governance with the participation of the whole society” proposed in “China’s Education Modernization 2035” can be successfully achieved only by “promoting local education modernization planning based on local conditions”.

In terms of curriculum education: It is worth expressing that the 2017 College English Teaching Guide replaces the previous College English Curriculum Requirements, which reflects the change in the guiding ideology of the national macro policy on English education, giving colleges and universities more autonomy to carry out diversified and targeted college English teaching

5. The Evaluation and Investigation of Teaching Materials

In December 2019, the Ministry of Education issued the Measures for the Administration of Teaching Materials for Ordinary Institutions of Higher Learning, which clearly stipulated the requirements for the compilation, review, selection, support, inspection and supervision of teaching materials, hoping to effectively improve the level of teaching materials construction. The College English Teaching Guide (2020 edition) points out that the guiding ideology of textbook compilation should mirror the new requirements of the New Era, reflect the basic requirements of the government on education, serve the teaching reform of higher education and talent cultivation, and reflect the accumulation of human cultural knowledge and innovation achievements (He Lianzhen, 2020).

Zhang Hong (2021) surveyed that 3967 English majors and college English teachers from 647 colleges and universities of different levels and types in 31 provinces and autonomous regions in China in the form of questionnaires about the problems in current college English teaching materials [7]. Some common problems are found in the textbooks:

- 1) Textbooks focus on introducing foreign cultures but shortage of local;
- 2) The teaching material is not interesting enough, the content is updated slowly and lacks the characteristics of the New Era;
- 3) The unit designs, input materials, exercise designs and supporting resources of textbooks are not reasonable and cannot meet the teaching needs of teachers and students.

6. The Interaction and Evaluation of Online Teacher-Student

During the epidemic, the changing English teaching environment has brought new challenges to teacher-student interaction and learning assessment. Chinese scholars have conducted surveys of students, teachers and evaluators.

- 1) Online learning by students:

Rui Lancao (2021) conducted an empirical study on online teaching design of college English during COVID-19 [8]. SPSS was used to analyze the experimen-

tal data, and it was concluded that online teaching during the epidemic brought opportunities for college English teaching reform, and mobile terminals could become effective learning tools for students with reasonable teaching design. Reasonable teaching design is the necessary condition to improve students' online learning effect. Strengthening the management of students' online learning process and feedback of learning state can significantly improve the learning effect; Effective online learning can significantly cultivate the quality of students' autonomous learning.

2) Online teaching by teachers:

Chen Minjie (2020) studied the classroom transformation [9]. The epidemic promoted the role change of teachers and the improvement of the application ability of new media technology, and built a mature teaching team, which had a positive impact on the classroom transformation of college English.

3) Measures of the online teaching achievement:

Song Hongxue (2020) cogitates on the transformation of course assessment and evaluation methods during online teaching [10]. The evaluation method has changed from the previous offline summative evaluation dominated by the final written examination to formative evaluation. It has the following characteristics: Dynamic curriculum evaluation based on OBE (Output-based Education) and students' learning results-oriented Education; since the "Requirements for College English Course Teaching" was issued in 2004, college English courses have gradually adopted a combination of formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Changes in the teaching environment during the epidemic have posed challenges to the evaluation of teaching results, and it has become an objective requirement to appropriately increase the proportion of formative evaluation again. In addition, it also puts forward ideas and suggestions on integrating qualitative evaluation and quantitative evaluation and setting up diversified evaluation subjects.

7. Conclusion

The use of online education resources during the COVID-19 pandemic has provided students with better teaching techniques and resources. But at the same time, due to the sudden shift of English education to online teaching, teachers have limited technical adaptability, while students have strong adaptability but lack of self-control. In short, the new technology has brought better teaching results, though there are still some shortcomings. This also indicates that it is possible to carry out education equity development strategy in rural and other backward areas in the future. This will help improve the literacy level (including English) of China's workforce as a whole. It provides more sources of practical knowledge and practical users for the development and growth of Sino-English in the future international exchanges.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Appendix

Table A1. List of 49 journal articles on English education in Chinese periodicals of CNKI in 2020-2021.

No.	TITLES OF PAPERS
1	A survey on online Learning strategies of College English courses in the context of COVID-19
2	The Design and implementation of online English teaching in primary schools in the context of COVID-19
3	An analysis of online College English teaching satisfaction during COVID-19
4	A Study on the mixed Teaching methods of Online and offline College English: A case study of online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic
5	A study on online and offline Mixed Teaching methods of High school English during the COVID-19 pandemic
6	Practice and Reflection on Online College English teaching during COVID-19: A case study of Harbin University of Science and Technology
7	Study on the design of online English teaching activities in high school under the background of COVID-19
8	Reflections on online College English Teaching in the context of COVID-19
9	A preliminary study on “four-dimensional” online teaching of TCM English during the period of COVID-19
10	Online teaching strategies for Literary English during COVID-19
11	Practice and Thinking of online College English teaching in Vocational Colleges during COVID-19 prevention and control
12	An analysis of online English education for college students during COVID-19
13	A Preliminary study on the “Online + offline” Mixed Teaching mode of College English Vocabulary -- A Case study of “COVID-19 English Vocabulary”
14	Online learning patterns and effects of Business English majors during COVID-19: A case study of comprehensive English courses for Business English majors in Shanghai University of International Business and Economics
15	A large sample survey of Middle school students’ English learning anxiety during the resumption of classes due to COVID-19
16	An analysis of the positive impact of COVID-19 on college English classroom transformation
17	A study on online Mixed Teaching of College English under COVID-19
18	An investigation of online Course experience during COVID-19 -- A case study of English Teachers major of Chuzhou University from 2017 to 2019
19	Practice of online College English teaching during COVID-19
20	Research and practice of online teaching method of “Curriculum, Ideology and Politics” in medical English in the context of COVID-19
21	Practice and Reflection on Online College English Teaching in the context of COVID-19
22	Online College English teaching mode in the context of COVID-19
23	A survey on the status quo of online live teaching of College English courses in Guangxi under the impact of COVID-19
24	Design and exploration of Integrated English Teaching mode in Vocational Colleges under COVID-19
25	The role of online teachers in public English teaching for postgraduates in the context of COVID-19
26	Research on innovative models of online business English teaching in the context of COVID-19
27	A Brief discussion on the Exploration of College English Teaching Mode in the context of COVID-19
28	The penetration of nationalism in online teaching for English majors during COVID-19: A case study of audio-visual Speaking Course 1

Continued

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- 29 The Exploration and Practice of Ideological and Political Education in The Context of COVID-19:
A case study of Hunan Software Vocational College
- 30 Political and Ideological Thinking of College English Courses from the Perspective of College Students' Tendency to
Respond to Diverse Public Opinions -- Based on an investigation of college students' diverse public opinions on
COVID-19
- 31 A preliminary study on the effect of college English Blended Teaching mode in the context of COVID-19
- 32 Research on innovative Teaching mode of Public English in medical schools under COVID-19:
A case study of Liaoning He Medical College
- 33 A study on online Interactive Teaching mode of College English in the context of COVID-19
- 34 Tell the real Story of Wuhan to the world -- From Ge Yunfei, a reporter of CGTV English
and an advanced individual in the Fight against COVID-19 in China
- 35 Analysis of English learning anxiety of non-English major College students during ONLINE live
broadcast during COVID-19
- 36 Construction of three-dimensional teaching model of Moral Education in Business English courses based on major
events: A case study of fighting COVID-19
- 37 A survey on College English Teaching in the context of COVID-19: A case study of Gansu
University of Chinese Medicine
- 38 The development and Creative thinking of English language for COVID-19 prevention and control
- 39 Critical Discourse analysis of English news discourse from the perspective of Fisher's THREE-DIMENSIONAL analysis
model: A case study of The New York Times' coverage of COVID-19 in China
- 40 An Attitude analysis of News Discourse from the perspective of Evaluation Theory:
A case study of English NEWS reports related to COVID-19
- 41 Online Teaching of Public English in Vocational Colleges under COVID-19 -- a case study of Hainan
Software Vocational and Technical College
- 42 Construction and exploration of online medical English teaching mode in the context of COVID-19
- 43 An English Language Guide for The Prevention and Control of COVID-19 by
Persons piloting Ships has been published
- 44 An English Language Guide for The Prevention and Control of COVID-19 by Vessel Operators has been launched
- 45 Development of a COVID-19 Medical English glossary from the perspective of emergency Language Services
- 46 Ideological and Political Education in the Mixed Teaching of Public English in Vocational
Colleges -- A teaching design based on the COVID-19 epidemic
- 47 Analysis and thinking of online teaching for Overseas Students of Clinical medicine major in
English under the background of COVID-19
- 48 Online Teaching of College English during COVID-19
- 49 Opportunities and Challenges faced by English majors under COVID-19:
A case study of Hubei University of Economics
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