

Training of Chinese Language Teachers at Confucius Institutes in the UK: A Case Study of the University College London Institute of Education Confucius Institute

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Abstract—The proficiency of Chinese language teachers is a crucial factor in determining the effectiveness and quality of Chinese language teaching. Over the years, the Confucius Institute in the UK has experienced significant growth, leading to the gradual expansion of the Chinese language teaching industry. Consequently, there has been a surge in interest in local Chinese language teacher training. This article focuses on the Confucius Institute at the University College London Institute of Education and examines its Chinese language teacher training mode from diverse perspectives. It also provides specific recommendations based on a thorough analysis, aimed at offering guidance and inspiration for the training of Chinese language teachers not only in the UK but worldwide.

Keywords—international Chinese education, Chinese language teacher training, Confucius Institute at University College London Institute of Education

I. INTRODUCTION

The UK's increased focus on Chinese language teaching, coupled with the growing cultural and educational exchanges between China and the UK, has led to a rapid development of the Chinese language teaching industry in the UK. Currently, there are 30 Confucius Institutes in the UK, surpassing other European countries, and serving as a significant platform for promoting the dissemination of Chinese language and enhancing Sino-European exchanges. Consequently, the demand for the number and proficiency of Chinese language teachers in the UK has increased significantly.

The Confucius Institute at the University College London Institute of Education (UCL IOE CI) was established in 2013 through a collaboration between the University College London Institute of Education (UCL IOE) and Peking University. UCL IOE, which has maintained its top global ranking in the field of education for ten consecutive years, boasts an advanced and comprehensive education system. Consequently, its approach to constructing Confucius Institutes is tailored to local conditions and is distinctive. This article examines the Chinese language teacher training model of UCL IOE CI, with the aim of highlighting the current state of Chinese language teacher training at Confucius Institutes in the UK and presenting innovative ideas for the training of Chinese language teachers in the UK and beyond.

II. TRAINING FOR CHINESE LANGUAGE TEACHERS AT UCL IOE CI

In previous studies on the training of Chinese language teachers, experts and scholars have rarely addressed Confucius Institutes in the UK. Only a few articles have

discussed the training of Chinese language teachers, specifically at Confucius Institutes in the UK, without mentioning specific and systematic training models. The article aims to fill in the gaps by presenting the particular aspect of training.

UCL IOE CI has offered numerous courses for the training of Chinese language teachers. The article follows the internal logic of their system to describe the specific situation as follows [1].

Firstly, among all teacher training programs, the majority consists of core course training that caters to the diverse needs of Chinese language teachers in the UK and is the most comprehensive and systematic. It encompasses the core elements of the UCL IOE CI Chinese language training course, with the aim of cultivating teaching skills among Chinese language teachers and promoting the future development of related professions. The specific details of the core course training are as follows:

A. Core Teacher Training Courses

1) Courses for mandarin speakers

a) Annual Chinese teaching conference

The annual gathering of teaching professionals in Mandarin schools in the UK, held typically in June each year (except in 2021 and 2022 due to COVID-19, and the 2023 event will depend on the situation), is the largest of its kind. The conference features keynote speeches, professional development seminars, student performances, textbook exhibitions, and online exchanges. Distinguished scholars and experts in the field of Chinese language teaching convene to discuss a broad range of topics related to the field, with the aim of integrating resources and sharing perspectives.

b) Blue kite film day

This event is open to both students and teachers enrolled in the preparatory Chinese language class at the University of Cambridge. The morning session will focus on group discussions of Chinese films, film analysis, and the conceptualization of the movie "Blue Kite". In the afternoon, students will have the opportunity to view films together, while teachers will participate in a seminar focused on film teaching.

c) GCSE day

GCSE Day, led by AQA and Edexcel, will center on the evaluation and feedback of this year's GCSE grades. The program will include a course that focuses on teaching the four key language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), with guidance provided to demonstrate how

teachers can help students achieve their best possible performance.

d) Schools and universities day

Schools and Universities Day offers a unique opportunity for dialogue between students and university representatives, as increasing numbers of students express interest in studying Mandarin at the university level. Teachers attending this event can effectively understand how to best support students in preparing to continue learning Mandarin in university, as well as gain insight into the universities' expectations for incoming undergraduate students. Supported by multiple distinguished universities and institutions, this event is held biennially.

e) Upskilling course

This blended learning course is free and available to primary and secondary school teachers who have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and wish to enhance their Mandarin language and teaching skills for teaching at Key Stage 3 and 4. The course is currently designed to run for two years in primary schools and three years in secondary schools. Participating teachers will receive the following benefits each year:

- Three face-to-face workshop days, which will focus on consolidating language skills and developing pedagogical strategies for teaching Chinese language and culture.
- A self-study online language course, which will be supported by the UCL IOE CI team and will include online lessons with native Chinese speakers to enhance language proficiency.
- The opportunity to participate in an intensive language learning course each year, which will take place in Years 1 and 3 in the UK and Year 2 in China.
- Level tests will be provided each year to track progress and ensure teachers are meeting the required language proficiency levels.
- Participants will have the opportunity to enter the internationally recognised HSK Chinese language tests.

f) Early leaders' course

This three-day course is designed for new and ambitious leaders who are playing a leading role in the Chinese teaching community, such as Confucius Classroom Managers, Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing (MEP) Managers, and Heads of Mandarin Chinese. The course takes the form of a conference, with presentations by education professionals who have expertise in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) backgrounds, particularly in Chinese language teaching. The course activities are interactive and include problem-solving and group discussions. Participants will discuss leadership style, time management, and teamwork. Participants will also be required to complete tasks and prepare for discussions. To receive the course certificate, all participants must attend all sessions and provide evidence of project completion.

2) Courses for beginners or non-mandarin speakers

a) Free Upskilling in mandarin course for QTS secondary and primary teachers in England

The Free Upskilling in Mandarin Course is designed for QTS primary and secondary school teachers in England who wish to enhance their language and teaching skills for

teaching Mandarin up to KS3 and KS4. This blended learning program includes four courses, ranging from level one to level two, with each course having a duration of one year. Teachers can select the appropriate course based on their teaching stage and Chinese language proficiency. Those who opt for level-2 course must complete the level-1 course or possess a basic level of Mandarin beforehand.

Furthermore, apart from the core courses, there are also various personalized and distinctive courses including the following:

B. Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Teacher Training

Due to the requirement for teachers to obtain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in Chinese language education in England and Wales, this course is specifically designed for individuals who aspire to become certified Mandarin teachers, capable of teaching students aged 11–19 across primary, secondary, and university settings [2]. The course is structured to cover various themes on a weekly basis, such as language teaching methods, context in language teaching, and the national curriculum. PGCE student teachers train full-time throughout an entire academic year, which spans from September to July, encompassing approximately 36 weeks. The course comprises:

- university lectures
- group tuition
- workshops
- directed reading
- teaching tasks and activities
- x2 10-week school placements
- assessed written assignments

C. Primary Mandarin Chinese

This course offers teacher training to primary school teachers who seek to teach Mandarin to their students, but have limited or no knowledge of the language. The course aims to enhance their Chinese language teaching techniques and improve their language skills. It includes:

- A novel approach to teaching Mandarin language and pronunciation
- A curriculum for Mandarin Chinese studies and related resources
- Introduction to Chinese characters
- Cultural and intercultural content tailored to assist the non-specialist teacher
- The option for continued study online

D. Early Career Framework (Early Career Professional Development—Mandarin Teacher Micro-Programme)

This three-day professional development project is specifically designed for first and second-year early career teachers of Mandarin in schools across the United Kingdom. It offers personalized support for these vocational teachers to enhance their teaching practices and meet Teachers' Standards. Aligned with the Early Career Framework outlined by the Department for Education (DfE), this micro-programme aims to supplement the general Early Career Teacher (ECT) induction programme developed by DfE-funded providers [3].

E. Subject Expertise (Enquiry-Based Subject Expert Micro-Programme)

This one-year project is designed for Mandarin teachers who have a minimum of one year of teaching experience in the UK. The course follows a blended learning approach, with three online seminars and three face-to-face joint practical development meetings held on the University College London campus. Throughout this period, participants will engage in a collaborative action research project alongside their team leader and fellow members of the specific field working group. The program is also designed to provide support to experienced Mandarin teachers seeking

to elevate their professional standing and broaden their range of responsibilities by engaging in cooperative action research initiatives. Such projects offer seasoned educators the chance to investigate practical areas within their field that can be improved upon to enhance student performance, while also fostering collaboration with peers, experts, and scholars to explore innovative teaching methods. Additionally, the program affords experienced teachers greater opportunities to contribute to the wider Mandarin learning and teaching network by sharing their research projects and teaching techniques.

Table 1. UCL IOE CI Chinese language teacher training courses

Programme	Trainees	Format	Costs	Duration
Annual Chinese teaching conference	Teachers of Chinese in English education system and all other staff involved learning about China	Speech, exhibition, seminar	Minor fees (depending on the situation)	Specific days in June
Blue Kite Film Day	Teachers in Cambridge Pre U Mandarin	seminar	Free or minor fees (depending on the situation)	1 day
GCSE Day	Secondary and Primary School Teachers (proficient/native Mandarin speakers)	Speech, seminar	Free or minor fees (depending on the situation)	1 day
Free Upskilling in Mandarin Course for QTS Secondary and Primary Teachers in England	QTS Secondary and Primary School Teachers (Mandarin beginners) QTS Secondary and Primary School Teachers (proficient/native Mandarin speakers)	Online self-study course, offline courses, seminar, proficiency test	Free or minor fees (including accommodation, excluding travel and daily expenses)	2 years (for primary courses) 3 years (for secondary courses)
Schools and Universities Day	Primary and Secondary School Teachers (proficient/native Mandarin speakers)	Seminar	Free or minor fees (depending on the situation)	Specific days
Early Leaders' Course	New leader in the of field of Chinese language teaching	Speech, seminar, tasks	100€	3 days
PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) Teacher Training	Teachers wishing to become qualified teachers of Mandarin Chinese in schools and colleges (teaching pupils aged 11–19 years)	offline courses, offline courses, school placement	Indicative Fee Home/EU: £9,250 International: £21,600	36 weeks
Primary Mandarin Chinese	Primary teachers (who wish to teach students Mandarin but have little or no knowledges of Mandarin)	online courses, offline courses	Free or minor fees (including accommodation, excluding travel and daily expenses)	Unclear (depending on the situation)
Early Career Framework (Early Career Professional Development—Mandarin Teacher Micro-programme)	First-Year or Second-Year Early Career teachers of Mandarin in UK-based schools	Seminar, practical projects	Free	3 days
Subject Expertise (Enquiry-based Subject Expert Micro-programme)	Qualified School Teachers of Mandarin in UK (with at least 1 full year UK school-based teaching Experience)	Seminar, practical projects	Free	1 year

III. ANALYSIS

The analysis of UCL IOE CI Chinese language teacher training courses as follows (see Table 1):

A. Advantages

1) Rich and diverse forms of activities

At UCL IOE CI's training activities for Chinese language teachers, a diverse range of training methods have been effectively employed, including online discussions, offline practices, and cultural experiences. Participants have the flexibility to choose courses that align with their specific needs, thereby providing ample opportunities for personalization and enhancing the probability of successful

training. [4]

2) Targeted training for different types of teachers

Taking into account the varying levels and backgrounds of participating teachers, UCL IOE CI's training activities for Chinese language teachers offer tailored courses with differentiated content. Experienced Chinese language teachers are provided with opportunities to further enhance their language proficiency, improve their teaching techniques, and collaborate with experts and scholars to undertake research projects. In contrast, beginner-level or non-Mandarin-speaking teachers are primarily trained in language skills, consolidating foundational knowledge before advancing to higher-level exercises. This targeted approach not only enhances the effectiveness of Chinese language

training but also opens up opportunities for individuals interested in pursuing a career as Chinese language teachers or advancing their current position. It plays a crucial role in expanding the English Chinese language teaching team, and in turn, contributes to the promotion of Chinese language and culture education.[5]

3) Emphasizing the combination of subject teaching and career development

The Chinese language teacher training program at UCL IOE CI not only enhances the pedagogical competencies of teachers but also considers their career development trajectories. Drawing on the Teachers' Standards for Chinese language teachers in the UK and DfE's Early Career Framework, this program offers ample opportunities for teachers to deepen their understanding of and further advance their professional skills in the field of Chinese language teaching. Such a measure ensures a certain degree of professional security for teachers, particularly in cases where their training outcomes may fall short of expectations.

4) Emphasizing communication and interconnection between different stages and institutions

UCL IOE CI has maintained an open and inclusive attitude in its teacher training programs. The institution actively collaborates with other prestigious universities and institutions in the UK to conduct training activities, aiming to absorb advanced experiences and achievements, achieve resource sharing, and promote win-win cooperation. This enriches the content of Chinese language teacher training and advances the achievements of Chinese language teacher training, ultimately creating a healthy and harmonious teacher training community environment [6].

5) Actively advocating for public welfare

The Chinese language teacher training courses offered at this school are characterized by their inclusivity and affordability. Some courses are provided free of charge, while others are available at a minimal cost, thereby expanding the pool of beneficiaries and affording more teachers access to training. The upshot is that the overall standard of Chinese language teaching in the UK is raised significantly. UCL IOE CI's sharing of resources and expertise is an exemplary demonstration of its commitment to social responsibility and excellence in education. Such practices are not only an inspiration to other institutions, but they also contribute to a more harmonious educational environment.

6) Good practice of the principle of educational rationality

In accordance with the principles of educational rationality, teacher training activities should encourage educators to engage in practical exploration, join research teams, participate in project-based research, deepen their understanding of educational concepts, and enhance their pursuit of educational values through practical experiences. UCL IOE CI offers numerous seminar-style training opportunities for teachers, as well as facilitates collaborative writing and communication, thereby aiding teachers in the implementation of educational rationality's standards and requirements.

B. Disadvantages and Suggestions

1) Experiential training activities need to strengthen practicality

In the context of teacher training activities at UCL IOE CI, while short-cycle experiential activities offer opportunities for teachers to develop an understanding of various teaching methods, there are also inherent limitations to such activities. Namely, their design tends to prioritize brevity over comprehensiveness, thereby restricting the amount of practical instruction and teaching implementation. Although these activities do foster the exchange of pedagogical theories and ideas among teachers, the number of practical opportunities available to teachers is comparatively limited.

To optimize the effectiveness of teacher training activities, it is advisable to augment the proportion of practical activities in their design [7]. By integrating theory and practice, such activities can offer a more comprehensive learning experience. For instance, during a film exploration training day, teachers could be assigned to temporarily design and run a simulation classroom that incorporates film-themed teaching [8].

2) Cultural value training for Chinese language teachers needs to be strengthened

The mastery of a language involves not only linguistic and pedagogical proficiency, but also a profound comprehension of the cultural underpinnings that shape its use. Regrettably, in the Chinese language teacher training program at UCL IOE CI, the emphasis on language and teaching content has overshadowed the critical significance of cultural understanding, thereby hindering the development of well-rounded educators capable of imparting the complexities of Chinese language and culture to their students.

In future Chinese language teacher training programs, it would be beneficial for this school to consider including cultural content as optional courses. For instance, teachers could participate in seminars on topics such as Chinese character culture or ancient Chinese poetry culture, which would provide them with an opportunity to experience the charm of Chinese culture, deepen their understanding of Chinese content, enhance their teaching enthusiasm, and strengthen their teaching identity.

3) The normalization process of training needs to be promoted

UCL IOE CI can also consider incorporating teacher training activities into the regular schedule of Chinese language teachers, rather than just providing occasional training programs. By doing so, teachers can have a more consistent and structured approach to professional development, and training can become an integral part of their daily routines [9]. This will not only encourage teachers to take more initiative in their own learning and growth, but also promote a culture of continuous learning and improvement within the school community [10].

4) The training format lacks novelty and needs to be broken through

The teacher training programs offered by UCL IOE CI exhibit a predominantly traditional approach, with a lack of innovation and novelty. The conventional modes of face-to-face teaching, seminars, and practical projects fail to

showcase remarkable experimentation or exploratory measures, leaving ample room for further development and experimentation [11].

As a preeminent institution in the field of education, UCL IOE has a responsibility to push the boundaries of innovation and solidify its position as a leader in the global education landscape. UCL IOE CI can take an active role in developing novel models for Chinese language teacher training, providing teachers with cutting-edge, high-quality learning experiences. For example, UCL IOE CI could offer on-site experiential Chinese language teacher training programs that provide teachers with opportunities to observe real classroom instruction. After the classroom observation, teachers could be required to write reports analyzing the experience from both the teacher's and student's perspectives. Subsequently, training teachers and teaching teachers could engage in communication and discussion to facilitate effective knowledge and experience sharing.

IV. CONCLUSION

The teaching profession inherently prioritizes continuous learning, and it is incumbent upon educational institutions to ensure that teachers are afforded opportunities for growth and development alongside their students [12].

In conclusion, UCL IOE CI has made commendable progress in the overall planning and implementation of Chinese language teacher training, which sets a standard for other Confucius Institutes to follow. However, there is still room for improvement in practicality, standardization, and innovative approaches, which require further refinement. These challenges offer valuable insights for Confucius Institutes in the UK and worldwide.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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