

EVOLUTION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH
TECHNOLOGYВЛИЯНИЕ ТЕХНОЛОГИЙ НА РАЗВИТИЕ
ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

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**Usage of information technologies in teaching Chinese
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Abstract. *Problem statement.* There is currently an influx of Chinese students in Russian universities. They often study remotely or in mixed groups (when some students are in the classroom and some are online). This article discusses how to use information technologies most effectively in distance learning, taking into account the mentality of Chinese students. *Methodology.* The paper is based on the results of expert interviews conducted among Chinese students of Lomonosov Moscow State University and investigations devoted to Chinese mentality and forms and methods of education. *Results.* The results of this work are specific recommendations of how to use information technologies in teaching Chinese students more effectively. *Conclusion.* None of the teaching methods is the best or universal, some are simply more appropriate or acceptable in a particular situation. To choose the right one it is needed to take into account the mentality of Chinese students.

Keywords: forms and methods of education, mentality of Chinese students, distance learning

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Использование информационных технологий при обучении китайских студентов в российских вузах

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Аннотация. *Постановка проблемы.* В настоящее время наблюдается наплыв китайских студентов в российских университетах. Обычно они обучаются удаленно или в смешанных группах (когда часть студентов присутствует в аудитории, а часть занимается онлайн). В этой статье обсуждается, как использовать информационные технологии при обучении, максимально эффективно принимая во внимание менталитет китайских студентов. *Методология.* Исследование опирается на результаты экспертных интервью, проведенных среди китайских студентов МГУ им. М.В. Ломоносова, и исследований, посвященных менталитету китайцев и формам и методам обучения. *Результаты.* Результатами этой работы стали конкретные рекомендации, как использовать информационные технологии при обучении китайских студентов наиболее эффективно. *Заключение.* Ни один из методов обучения не является лучшим или универсальным, некоторые просто более подходящие или приемлемые в конкретной ситуации. Для того, чтобы выбрать наиболее уместный метод, надо принимать во внимание менталитет китайских студентов.

Ключевые слова: формы и методы обучения, менталитет китайских студентов, дистанционное обучение

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Problem statement. The development of relations between Russia and China leads to the growth of the amount of Chinese students who come to Russia to study. Currently, a large number of Chinese students are studying at Russian universities. As of August 19, 2024, their number was 48 thousand¹. According to Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova, this is almost 10 thousand more than in the previous period – 2023 / 2024 academic year. There is a clear trend of growth in the number of Chinese students in Russian universities. The direction of secondary education is also developing. Thus, 150 students from China are studying in Russian colleges².

¹ TASS. Golikova: About 48 thousand Chinese students study at Russian universities. (In Russ.) <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/21636417> (accessed: 12.12.2024)

² Ibid.

At Lomonosov Moscow State University, citizens of China make up more than a half of the foreign students. Now their number is about 7 thousand³. In particular, at the School of Public Administration, according to Dean Vyacheslav Nikonov, more than 400 Chinese students are studying at all levels of education – at bachelor, master and PhD programs⁴.

Chinese students have some particular features because of their cultural peculiarities that should be taken into account in educational process. Chinese mentality was studied by T. Morrison, W.A. Conaway, V.V. Sobolnikov, R. Nisbett, N.A. Speshnev, M. Gelfand [1–5], and others.

A lot of Chinese students study online or in class using digital technologies, and the approach of professors should be adapted according to Chinese mentality. The usage of informational technologies in education was studied by many authors, such as V.V. Grinshkun, O.Yu. Zaslavskaya, A.I. Azevich, and others [6].

This article is focused on how to use informational technologies in teaching Chinese students taking into account their national peculiarities and mentality. The goal of the work is to give specific recommendations of how professors should use the digital technologies in order to make education of Chinese students more efficient.

Methodology. This article is based on the results of expert interviews of 9 Chinese students of School of Public Administration of Moscow State University. They answered the following questions:

- Why have you chosen MSU?
- Why have you chosen School of Public Administration?
- What do you want to gain as a result of education?
- What difficulties have you faced in the process of education?
- Do you study online or in class?
- If online – what pluses and minuses do you see in it?
- What would you like to be changed in the educational process?

This article is also based on investigations devoted to Chinese mentality and to the forms and methods of education.

Results and discussion. According to expert interviews, the Chinese students have chosen Moscow State University because its outstanding reputation, long and profound history and international student community. Concerning School of Public Administration they have said that it is unique in the research and education of human resource management in the public sector, providing internships in numerous public institutions. As interviews have shown, during their studies the Chinese

³ Lomonosov Moscow State University. *Citizens of China make up more than a half of foreign students at the Lomonosov Moscow State University*. (In Russ.) <https://msu.ru/press/smiaboutmsu/grazhdane-kitaya-sostavlyayut-bolee-poloviny-inostrannykh-studentov-v-mgu.html> (accessed: 12.12.2024)

⁴ Lomonosov Moscow State University, School of Public Administration. *On April, 16, there was a meeting between the delegation of the Joint University of Moscow State University – PPI in Shenzhen (PRC) and representatives of School of Public Administration*. (In Russ.) <https://spa.msu.ru/16-aprelya-sostoyalas-vstrecha-delegaczii-sovmestnogo-universiteta-mgu-ppi-v-shenchzhene-kr-s-predstaviteli-fakulteta-gosudarstvennogo-upravleniya> (accessed: 12.12.2024)

students faced such challenges as language of study proficiency (Russian or English) and integration of interdisciplinary knowledge.

Distance learning is currently quite common among Chinese students at the School of Public Administration. These are mainly mixed learning groups – some students are present in person, and some are online. This format of work creates many difficulties – it is impossible to monitor whether all students are listening, whether they are involved in the educational process, whether they understand everything, etc. In addition, this creates obstacles to collective work on assignments, which is preferable for the Chinese.

Distance learning is implemented through the use of Internet technologies and other means of communication in order to conduct a wide range of educational activities that contribute to the deepening of knowledge [7].

The advantages of distance learning include the following:

- significant reduction in living and travel costs for students from other countries;
- students learn the proposed material more quickly. According to M.I. Magura and M.B. Kurbatova, when using distance learning, there is a reduction in training time by 30–50 % and an 80 % improvement in memorization of the material, compared to other methods [8, p. 91].

If we are talking about materials posted on the School's distance platform on the Internet, then the following advantages are added:

- flexibility, since students can study at a time convenient for them [9, p. 141]. All people have individual characteristics. For example, we can distinguish “larks” who find it easier to remember and analyze information in the morning, and “owls” who do it more effectively in the evening;
- availability at any time when the need arises, unlike face-to-face education, in which the educational material is presented only once and then can be forgotten.

However, distance learning has its weaknesses [10, p. 110]:

- difficulty in maintaining motivation for learning and monitoring the process of acquiring knowledge. The teacher cannot understand how attentively the students are listening to him, whether they are doing something else unrelated to their studies. Students can be distracted by something, are not involved in the learning process;
- the ability to transfer mainly theoretical knowledge, it is difficult to master any skills and abilities;
- if the training is mixed (some students are present in person, and some online), then those who are connected remotely may have difficulty hearing those students who are present in the classroom;
- technical problems are possible (the connection may be interrupted, problems with video and sound may appear);
- difficulty in organizing teamwork.

The Chinese students have also mentioned eye fatigue, lack of face-to-face interaction during distance learning that sometimes makes them feel lonely.

In accordance with the teaching method, professor has to choose the forms of teaching. There are many of them. For example, Eitington's work examines more than two hundred forms of teaching and acquiring knowledge and skills [11]. In the distance learning method, traditional, distance and some active forms of teaching should be used.

Distance learning can be divided into asynchronous and synchronous learning [12, p. 108].

Asynchronous learning means that communication is delayed. The advantages of this form of learning compared to synchronous communication are greater accessibility and the opportunity to think over the answer. Its disadvantage is the lack of interaction on a personal level. An example of asynchronous learning is web courses on the Internet without the direct participation of a teacher.

Synchronous learning means that communication is carried out in real time and involves the use of communication channels with significant bandwidth for transmitting images and sound [13, p. 187]. The advantages of synchronous learning include providing direct support and individual interaction with students. The disadvantage is the inaccessibility of some communication channels. Examples of synchronous learning are web conferencing (virtual classes on the Internet, when the teacher and students are simultaneously on the same website) and video conferencing (the teacher conducts classes with students using video conferencing technology, which reduces transportation costs and decreases time expenditures).

In universities, synchronous forms of learning should prevail over asynchronous ones, otherwise students may feel lonely and demotivated.

Traditional forms that are actively used in distance learning include lectures and seminars. Such forms as independent work with educational texts and written assignments should be more frequently used with Chinese students, because they have the problem with language of study, and these forms could help them better understand learning material and master the foreign language.

Lectures and seminars. A characteristic feature of a lecture is that the teacher conveys information to students in the form of a monologue. This leads to the disadvantages of this form of teaching – the lack of practical exercises, feedback, and control over the learning process. Consequently, lectures should only be used in combination with active forms of teaching filled with practical exercises.

Seminars are traditionally an addition to lectures. They smooth out some of the disadvantages of this form of teaching. Seminars involve a dialogue between the teacher and students in order to deepen understanding and consolidate the material covered, and to correlate the information received with the experience and knowledge of students.

Independent work with educational texts. The greatest difficulty in using this form is the development or selection of the necessary manuals or documents. Texts in distance learning are sent to students electronically. Independent work should be given to Chinese students at home in addition to lectures and seminars. Since they do not know the language of study perfectly, this type of assignment will allow them to better understand and consolidate the material that was given to them in the lecture.

Written assignments. These assignments are given to students to consolidate and better understand what they have learned, and also serve as a kind of feedback on the quality and relevance of teaching activities. Such assignments may include answering questions, taking tests, writing essays. It is useful to use written assignments as a supplement to lectures, seminars, and independent work with educational documents. It is advisable to ask Chinese students to do assignments in groups, since they like teamwork, and this will contribute to their active involvement in the learning process. In this case, you can set aside time to complete the assignment right during the seminar in order to discipline and motivate students. It is advisable to ask students to present completed assignments during a remote seminar, so that they can improve their language skills and develop their presentation skills. In addition, the information they present will be useful to other students, and they can immediately receive feedback and answer questions from the professor and other students.

Among the forms of active learning in distance learning for Chinese students, it is recommended to use group discussions and case studies.

Group discussions. In group discussions, students are asked a problematic question or groups of questions on a topic that evokes different opinions and judgments [14, p. 26]. This form allows to activate learners, encourages them to analyze their own experience, share it with the group, which contributes to better assimilation of the material being studied. However, group discussions are difficult to use in groups where mixed learning is conducted, that is, where only some students are online, since they may have difficulty hearing what students in the audience are saying.

Case studies. The purpose of this form is to teach how to analyze information, sort it to solve a problem, and develop and evaluate alternative ways to solve problems. When using this form, the individual work of the student is combined with work in a group. At first, each student independently conducts an individual analysis. Then there is a discussion in subgroups of 3–7 people, into which the group of students is divided. At the end, each subgroup presents its results to the entire group [14, p. 26]. Case studies can be used to consolidate theoretical information and develop the ability to apply knowledge in practice.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that each form has its own advantages and disadvantages, which were analyzed above. If you correctly select and combine different forms of training, you can smooth out their weaknesses and profitably use their positive aspects.

When choosing forms of distance learning to use, it is needed to take into account the cultural characteristics of Chinese students [1]. Let's look at them in more detail.

The Chinese are very punctual, so any lateness to class and delays are unacceptable. So in the distance learning it is recommended to start the Internet session a little bit earlier than in a schedule and to wait the students to gather.

When writing, you can get down to the topic immediately after greeting, but do not forget to present all the information related to the topic.

When preparing presentations for classes, you need to remember that colors have a symbolic meaning, so it is better to use them less.

Chinese students are good at group work, they love it, so it is advisable to give them collective tasks even in distance learning. The larger the group completing the task, the more comfortable it is for them.

When several Chinese students receive a collective task, they discuss it for a long time. Therefore, they need to be given more time to work than Russian students.

When presenting completed tasks, they are modest, often speak in a quiet voice, so they need to be encouraged and praised.

It is undesirable to criticize Chinese students in the presence of other people, so mistakes should be voiced to them personally. If critical remarks still need to be voiced in front of the group of study, then you need to be as delicate and selective in your words as possible.

As for non-verbal communication, the Chinese do not like active gesticulation. This must be remembered even when teaching distantly.

It is very important for the Chinese to “save face”, so respect and patience must be shown in communication.

They appreciate and love humor, unless the jokes concern someone personally. Ironic remarks about someone are prohibited.

There are many good listeners among the Chinese – they will listen attentively, respectfully, will not interrupt, and do not like to be interrupted.

Since it is difficult to notice signs of attentive listening and understanding of the material during distance learning, it is necessary to additionally ask questions on understanding of the material, since Chinese students are not inclined to say that they did not understand something, since this means for them to “lose face”, to seem stupid.

Conclusion. Each form of learning has its own advantages and disadvantages, which were analyzed above. If you correctly select and combine different forms of training, you can smooth out their weaknesses and profitably use their positive aspects.

When deciding which forms of distance learning to use, it should be taken into account that none of the teaching methods is the best or universal, some are simply more appropriate or acceptable in a particular situation. In addition, it is needed to take into account the mentality of Chinese students.

Right and relevant usage of information technologies in education of Chinese students in universities will make the training process more efficient and interesting.

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