

Study on the Expectations of Primary International Students Regarding the Role of Chinese Teachers

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Abstract: Understanding the expectations of Chinese teachers from international students is crucial for improving Chinese teaching. Previous research has largely focused on middle- and high-level students, while there is a lack of studies on the expectations of primary-level students regarding Chinese teachers. Therefore, this study conducts a survey with 55 primary-level international students from a university in Nanjing to investigate their expectations of the role of Chinese teachers. The findings from the comprehensive survey analysis reveal that: (1) primary-level students generally have high expectations of the teacher's role; (2) There are significant differences in expectations based on gender, with male students having slightly higher expectations for the teacher's personality traits, while female students have a stronger emphasis on classroom teaching; (3) Students with different learning motivations have varying expectations of the teacher's role. Those with instrumental motivation have notably higher expectations for classroom teaching and improvements in teaching quality compared to students with integrative motivation. Chinese teachers need to adjust their teaching strategies flexibly to meet the expectations of students of different genders and learning motivations. This study provides significant guidance for adapting Chinese teaching methods and educational strategies specifically for primary-level international students.

1. Introduction

The expectation of teacher roles generally refers to students' perceptions of teachers' behaviours in specific roles^[1]. In second language learning, students' expectations of teacher roles are not only a key factor in implementing teaching but also reflect the importance of teaching quality and teacher-student interactions. The concept of teacher role expectations is applicable not only to native language teaching but also to various stages of Chinese language learning for international students, including both primary and intermediate/advanced levels. primary-level international students (including Beginning Learners) are learners who, before enrolment, have little to no mastery of Mandarin phonetics or cannot use Chinese phonetics, vocabulary, or grammar. Research indicates that primary-level international students have more significant expectations of Chinese teachers compared to intermediate and advanced students, as this directly affects their acceptance of

the new learning environment and the achievement of their learning goals. However, actual teaching surveys reveal that teachers often fail to fully meet the expectations of primary-level students, which can lead to serious consequences such as poor teaching quality, ineffective learning outcomes, and strained teacher-student relationships. Therefore, it is necessary to re-examine and deeply study the expectations of primary-level international students regarding teacher roles. This paper aims to focus on primary-level international students as the research subject, conducting in-depth investigations through field visits and questionnaires to explore the expectations and satisfaction levels of these students regarding Chinese teachers. Based on the analysis of expectation factors, possible effective improvement measures are proposed to provide important references for enhancing teaching design, teaching quality, educational strategies, and improving teacher-student relationships.

2. Survey design

2.1 Survey objectives

To promote the development of teaching design, quality, and educational strategies for primary-level Chinese language education among international students, this study delves into the expectations of these students regarding the personality traits, classroom teaching, and pedagogical improvements of Chinese teachers. It examines the significance of expectations for the teacher's role in the Chinese learning of international students. The survey contents include, but are not limited to, the teachers' methods of communication, abilities in imparting knowledge, and the degree of student care. Based on the analysis of survey data, this study aims to identify potential issues in current educational practices for Chinese language instruction among Chinese teachers, such as the adaptability of teaching methods and the quality of teacher-student interactions. Additionally, the paper will explore potential relationships between differences in gender, learning motivations, and expectations for the teacher's role among primary-level international students, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the expectations and satisfaction of different student groups regarding the teacher's role.

2.2 Survey tools

Building on previous research regarding international students' expectations of Chinese teachers^[2], this study has redesigned and compiled a questionnaire to analyse and study the role expectations of Chinese teachers from primary-level international students. The redesigned questionnaire aims to gain in-depth insights into these students' expectations regarding the teacher's role, encompassing multiple dimensions such as the teachers' personality traits, classroom teaching methods, and suggestions for improvement.

To ensure that the questionnaire is widely understood and yields accurate feedback from primary-level students, it is available in both Chinese and English. This bilingual approach allows students from diverse language backgrounds to respond accurately, ensuring that the questionnaire can comprehensively collect international students' expectations and suggestions for the role of Chinese teachers. This will provide more accurate survey feedback information and support further analysis and research with relevant data.

2.3 Survey schemes

The survey was conducted by distributing questionnaires in class. A total of 55 questionnaires were distributed, and 54 valid responses were successfully collected. The participating students

came from 9 countries, with ages ranging from 17 to 23. Among them, 34 were male and 20 were female. In terms of their major fields of study, 29 students were majoring in Computer Science and Technology, and 25 were majoring in International Economics and Trade. All participants have studied Chinese for no more than one year, and their HSK level is approximately 2.

3. Survey result

3.1 Overview of international students' expectations regarding the role of Chinese teachers

3.1.1 Expectations for personality feature

As shown in Table 1, this study categorizes teachers' personality traits into four main types: Affinity and Emotional Expression, Professional Competence and Responsibility, Communication and Interpersonal Skills, and Appearance and Image. These categories are distinguished based on educational psychology and teaching effectiveness theories, with the aim of investigating the impact of different personality traits of teachers on their performance in the classroom teaching role.

Table 1: Expectations Regarding Personality Traits.

Personality Traits	Expected Elements	Proportion(%)	Personality Traits	Expected Elements	Proportion(%)
Affinity and Emotional Expression Category	friendly	88.89%	Professional Competence and Sense of Responsibility Category	careful	68.52%
	helpful	88.89%		responsibility	66.67%
	smile	77.78%		hard-working	64.81%
	honest	74.07%		experienced	61.11%
	patience	72.22%		strong ability	48.15%
	kindly	66.67%		studious	44.44%
	manners	66.11%		thoughtful	37.04%
	Respect	64.81%		lots of interest	37.04%
	love	62.96%		principled	33.33%
	generous	50.00%		imaginative	20.37%
	gentle	50.00%	Communication and Interpersonal Skills Category	confidence	61.11%
	initiative	38.89%		passion	48.15%
	lively	37.04%		enjoy chatting	44.44%
	tolerance	37.04%		challenging	44.44%
	humour	29.63%		modest	35.19%
	enthusiasm	29.63%		prestige	20.37%
	affectionate	27.78%		simplicity	51.85%
	optimism	27.78%	Appearance and Image Category	good-looking	44.44%
	straightforward	16.67%		dress up	25.93%
	solemn	00.00%		young	18.52%

According to the data in Table 1, students at the primary stage primarily expect teachers to possess personality traits such as friendly, helpful, smile, honest, and patience. These traits contribute to creating a caring and relaxed learning environment, making students feel respected and understood. Research indicates that teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also guides in learning activities, which is crucial for effectively learning a second language^[3].

On the other hand, primary-stage students tend to prefer teachers who are older, more experienced, and knowledgeable. However, due to their limited proficiency in Chinese, they need patient guidance and careful assistance from their teachers. If the teaching style is too direct or serious, it may cause students to feel pressured and struggle to keep up with the pace. Therefore, it is important for teachers to demonstrate vitality and build good teacher-student relationships to enhance the learning experience.

The survey data indicates that teachers' personality traits significantly impact the learning

outcomes and experiences of primary-stage international students. Therefore, in teaching practice, teachers should not only impart knowledge but also provide emotional and academic support to boost students' motivation and sense of achievement.

3.1.2 Expectations for Classroom Teaching

Classroom teaching is the core component of the four major aspects of teaching Chinese as a foreign language (overall design, textbook compilation, classroom teaching, and testing), and it directly reflects the nature and characteristics of the subject. Effective analysis of primary-stage international students' expectations about classroom teaching can help teachers enhance teaching quality^[4].

Table 2: Expectations for Classroom Teaching.

Classroom Teaching	Proportion(%)	Classroom Teaching	Proportion(%)
Many good examples	79.63%	Appropriate homework	46.30%
Knowledge to explain clearly	72.22%	Correct homework on time	46.30%
Words easy to understand	70.37%	Speak Chinese	50.00%
Guide students	68.52%	Appropriately correction	44.44%
Answer students' questions	68.52%	Having games	42.59%
To encourage students	66.67%	Extracurricular knowledge	40.74%
Good attitude	66.67%	Innovation	40.74%
A teaching objectives	62.96%	Fair	40.74%
Explain in foreigner language	62.96%	Do not be late/no delay	38.89%
Good method	62.96%	Repeat old knowledge	38.89%
Active classroom	62.96%	More interaction	38.89%
Know about students	61.11%	Vivid language	31.48%
Give more opportunities	61.11%	Loud	31.48%
Listen to the views of students	57.41%	Gesture	31.48%
Teaching some culture	57.41%	Attractive blackboard word	29.63%
Remember students' name	55.56%	Allocation time reasonably	29.63%
Interesting content	53.70%	Use computers	29.63%
Prepared seriously	51.85%	Self-reflection	27.78%
Effective practice	50.00%	Strong rhythm	25.93%
The standard mandarin	48.15%	Tube discipline	22.22%

From Table 2, it can be seen that primary-stage international students' expectations for Chinese teachers' classroom teaching focus on several key elements, including "Many good examples", "Knowledge to explain clearly", "Words easy to understand", "Guide students", "Answer students' questions" and "To encourage students". Due to the significant differences between Chinese and most students' native languages, teachers cannot enable students to fully understand concepts solely through abstract explanations when teaching Chinese. This is especially important for primary-level international students with limited proficiency in Chinese; examples and situational contexts are crucial as they assist students in grasping abstract knowledge points using simpler vocabulary.

Furthermore, given their learning level, primary-stage international students may encounter difficulties in answering questions and keeping up with the pace of the class. Chinese teachers should provide correct and reasonable guidance and encouragement to help them build self-confidence, thereby stimulating their interest and enthusiasm for learning.

3.1.3. Expectations for teaching improvement

Based on the previous analysis, primary-stage international students have high expectations for Chinese teachers regarding their personal traits and classroom teaching. Next, we will investigate whether teachers meet these expectations in practice and assess whether students' suggestions for

improvement are being addressed.

Table 3: Expectations for Teacher Improvement.

Teacher Improvement	Proportion(%)	Teacher Improvement	Proportion(%)
The exam was too hard	31.48%	The method is rarely	9.26%
Too fast	29.63%	No patience	9.26%
Too serious	25.93%	Without passion	7.41%
Boring classroom	25.93%	Don't care about the students	7.41%
Other points	25.93%	Um-enough prepared	7.41%
Too much mother language	24.07%	Don't respect students	5.56%
Speed too fast	24.07%	Unprofessional	5.56%
Example small/did not understand	24.07%	Lack of creative	5.56%
A few opportunity to practice	24.07%	Cannot admit mistakes	5.56%
Content too hard/too easy	22.22%	Don't answer question	5.56%
Too much/little homework	20.37%	Late for class/delay school	3.70%
The small voice, inaudible	16.67%	Unfair	3.70%
Cannot understand	14.81%	Student strike	3.70%
The non-standard mandarin	12.96%	Dress down	3.70%
Classroom activities too long	12.96%	Cannot display a personal touch	1.85%
Often angry	11.11%		

According to the data from Table 3, a significant proportion of international students believe that "The exam was too hard" and "Too fast". Exams and teaching should be integrated, but in practice, they are often treated as separate and sometimes even opposing components. Many teachers' teaching arrangements do not integrate exams into the entire teaching process but instead consider them as a final evaluation stage. This leads to students perceiving the exams as challenging, which in turn affects their motivation and learning experience in Chinese.

Additionally, many students feel that Chinese teachers are "Too serious" and that the classes lack interest. Primary-stage international students face many challenges in the early stages of learning Chinese and hope that teachers will exhibit patience and a friendly attitude to help them overcome learning difficulties. Furthermore, teachers should recognize that the ultimate goal of language teaching is to develop communication skills. Therefore, in addition to imparting knowledge, classroom teaching should provide ample practice opportunities to enhance students' practical application abilities, thereby increasing the dynamism and attractiveness of the classes.

3.2 Analysis of the correlation between individual factors and expectation elements

3.2.1 Analysis of the correlation between gender and expectation elements

Based on the previous analysis, this paper has preliminarily understood the general expectations of primary-stage international students regarding Chinese teachers. However, these expectation elements may be correlated with individual characteristics of the students. Therefore, building on the previous analysis, we will further explore the correlation between students' individual characteristics and expectation elements.

Through data analysis, it has been found that male students generally have higher expectations regarding the personality traits of teachers compared to female students. Specifically, male students place the most emphasis on "helpful" (94.12%) and "friendly" (91.18%) in Chinese teachers. In contrast, female students value "friendly" (85%) and "smile" (80%) more. This difference may be influenced by cognitive styles: primary-stage male students are more inclined towards field dependence, while female students tend to be more field-independent. This tendency is particularly evident in interactions with teachers. In actual teaching practice, we have observed that boys are more inclined to communicate with teachers, actively seeking help and asking questions. In contrast,

girls may be more reserved and less proactive in directly communicating learning issues with teachers, often relying more on self-directed learning. However, whether inside or outside of class, they consistently display a friendly and smiling attitude, and expect teachers to respond in a similarly friendly manner.

Regarding classroom performance, female students have higher expectations than male students. They place particular importance on "Many good examples" (90%) and "Words easy to understand" (85%). In comparison, male students value "Many good examples" (73.53%) and "A teaching objectives" (67.65%) more. The data analysis reveals that female international students at the primary stage have a stronger motivation for learning Chinese. They exhibit higher concentration in class, paying close attention and taking notes, and expect teachers to provide rich examples and simple vocabulary to aid understanding. In contrast, male students at the primary stage may have slightly lower motivation. They tend to follow the teacher's pace and engage less in self-study after class, thus expecting teachers to offer ample examples to aid memory and set clear teaching goals to ease their burden of planning their own learning.

Regarding suggestions for teacher improvement, there are noticeable differences between male and female students. The data shows that a majority of male students (35.29%) believe their Chinese teachers are good and need no improvements, while another portion (32.35%) think "The exam was too hard". In contrast, female students are more likely to provide specific improvement suggestions, with the most common being "Too fast" (45%) and "Too serious" (35%). Generally, female students at the primary stage of second language classes demonstrate higher attentiveness and focus, allowing them to more clearly identify shortcomings in Chinese teachers' teaching. In contrast, boys may be more active and often struggle to maintain prolonged attention in class. As a result, some boys might be unable to clearly identify issues with the Chinese teacher or offer suggestions for improvement.

3.2.2 Analysis of the correlation between learning motivation and expectation elements

According to the study by Gardner and Lambert (1972), second language learning motivation can be classified into two categories: instrumental motivation, which refers to the desire to improve practical needs such as employment, education, or travel; and integrative motivation, which reflects an interest in the culture and society of the target language^[5]. This paper categorizes the motivations of international students learning Chinese into three distinct types: instrumental motivation (such as enhancing their competitive edge in work or studies), integrative motivation (interest in Chinese culture and society), and mixed motivation (the aspiration to gain a deeper understanding of China and its culture). Analysing the relationship between these motivations and the expectations of primary-level international students regarding Chinese teachers can provide valuable insights into the driving forces behind their language learning process.

Survey data shows that the majority of international students primarily possess instrumental motivation (51%), with the remainder holding integrative motivation (22%) and mixed motivation (29%). Despite differences in motivation, there is little overall variation in students' expectations of Chinese teachers. Regardless of their motivation, primary-level international students generally place high importance on the interpersonal skills of their teachers, particularly valuing qualities such as "friendly" and "helpful." Currently, most international students in higher education institutions in China are relatively young and new to studying in China, facing challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and academic pressures. To help them adapt to their study abroad experience, they expect their Chinese teachers to be friendly and patient. According to Horwitz (1986), educators can reduce anxiety by addressing anxiety-inducing factors and alleviating stress in the learning environment^[6]. Creating a low-pressure, supportive learning environment can enhance students' confidence and improve overall learning outcomes.

Regarding teaching approaches, students with instrumental motivation prefer that teachers provide detailed examples and use simple vocabulary. Students with integrative motivation place greater importance on the teacher's ability to address questions effectively and expect clear and straightforward language. Students with mixed motivation seek teachers who offer clear explanations and a wealth of examples. Overall, beginner-level international students anticipate diverse teaching examples and easily comprehensible language support from their teachers, while also hoping for additional assistance to facilitate their learning progress.

Regarding suggestions for teacher improvement, international students with instrumental motivation have higher expectations for teaching enhancements than those with other types of motivation. They place particular emphasis on the diversity of teaching methods and opportunities for practice, focusing more on the practicality of the language. Conversely, students with integrative and mixed motivation have slightly lower expectations for teaching improvements, which may be related to their interest in Chinese culture and broader cultural learning goals.

4. Reflections and insights

4.1 Establishing a good teacher-student relationship

Through a systematic analysis of the survey data, we have derived the following insights, which we hope will provide reference for Chinese teachers instructing primary international students.

Students studying abroad, especially those at the primary level, are particularly sensitive and vulnerable. Chinese teachers are often the first and most frequent people they interact with after arriving in China. Therefore, the relationship between Chinese teachers and international students should not be limited to just academic content. Teachers can establish a good teacher-student relationship by providing timely assistance through pre-class conversations and creating WeChat groups for communication. Numerous studies have shown that the quality of the teacher-student relationship significantly affects students' anxiety levels in language classes. It is also crucial for language learning, reducing affective filters, effectively decreasing anxiety, alleviating learning pressure, and creating a positive learning environment.

4.2 Emphasizing the Fun and Practicality of Classroom Teaching

Emphasizing the fun and practicality of classroom teaching is particularly important for international students at the primary level. Fun implies that Chinese teachers use humorous language and diverse activities during the teaching process to enhance the enjoyment of learning, thereby stimulating students' interest and participation. Since Chinese is a foreign language for most students, if the teaching process is too boring, students may quickly lose motivation to learn.

Therefore, in classroom teaching, teachers should actively interact with students, discuss topics they are interested in, and design some creative and fun activities. However, the design of these activities must conform to the principle of practicality, ensuring that they not only pursue fun but also effectively help students improve their Chinese language skills and practical application abilities.

4.3 Paying Attention to Individual Differences and Tailoring Instruction

Tailoring instruction refers to teachers customizing teaching methods and strategies based on students' actual conditions and individual characteristics to best meet their learning needs and promote their progress. Although implementing differentiated instruction is highly challenging, as teachers of Chinese as a foreign language, we should be attentive and actively identify students'

individual differences. By skilfully adjusting teaching methods, we can help each student find an approach that suits them during the learning process, leading to a better learning experience and greater learning outcomes^[7].

5. Conclusion and discussion

This study systematically analysed the expectations of 55 primary international students regarding the role of Chinese teachers through a questionnaire survey. The results indicate that students' expectations of teachers encompass various dimensions, including personality traits, classroom teaching methods, and suggestions for improvement, with varying levels of satisfaction regarding different teaching elements.

In terms of personality traits, students generally expect teachers to display friendliness, helpfulness, sincerity, and patience. Female students place more emphasis on teachers' warmth and emotional expression, while male students show a preference for teachers' professional competence and work attitude. These differences may relate to gender-related cognitive styles and personality traits, suggesting that teachers need to adapt their teaching interactions based on students' gender characteristics.

Regarding classroom teaching, students generally hope that teachers will provide detailed examples and use simple, understandable language to help them better grasp Chinese language points. Additionally, students with instrumental motivation have higher expectations for teachers' performance in classroom teaching, whereas students with integrative motivation have a stronger need for teachers' explanation skills and cultural integration. Therefore, teachers should adjust teaching content and methods based on students' learning motivations to meet the needs of different types of students.

In terms of teaching improvement suggestions, students generally believe that there is room for improvement in exam difficulty, lecture speed, and emotional expression. Teachers need to pay attention to students' learning stress and emotional state, adjusting the teaching pace and emotional support to enhance teaching quality and student satisfaction.

In summary, primary international students have clear expectations regarding Chinese teachers' personality traits, classroom teaching, and suggestions for improvement. Chinese teachers should pay attention to individual differences and teaching experiences, use diverse teaching strategies flexibly, enhance the fun and practicality of teaching, and establish good teacher-student relationships. Additionally, teachers should value students' feedback and suggestions, continuously improve teaching methods, and enhance teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Future research could further explore changes in students' expectations of Chinese teachers across different cultural backgrounds and learning stages, and how to more effectively meet these expectations.

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