

Oral Defense Announcement

University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Teaching and Learning Process

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The Pivot to Online Learning: A Case Study of EFL Student-Teachers' Learning Experiences and Perceptions in China

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Abstract

Teaching and learning online was extensively adopted in English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education programs, as well in education of all levels in China with the advancement of the internet, multimedia information processing, cloud computing, and other information technologies since 1994. However, online education has remained more of a supplement to classroom education, and large-scale normal online education lacks cases and research in China. The COVID-19 pandemic caused profound change in higher education, with closures of campuses globally and migration of learning and teaching practices to online formats. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional teaching and learning activities, meanwhile, creating opportunities for investigating innovative approaches to EFL teacher education. This case study explored the experiences and perceptions of the Chinese EFL student teachers' online learning, with the COVID-19 lockdown as the context.

This study adopted a qualitative research approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam & Merriam, 2009) consisting of two distinct phases: an open-ended response questionnaire followed by focus group interviews to investigate the Chinese EFL student teachers' experiences and perceptions of online learning. The participants were EFL student teachers who enrolled in the chosen normal university in China. The data included 148 responses from the open-ended response questionnaire and transcripts from two focus group interviews with 12 participants in total.

The findings from this study showed that a majority of participants had online classes for at least two semesters. Analysis of data on their online class experiences revealed four major themes: learner autonomy, digital skills, Internet connectivity, and interactivity. The findings indicated that the Chinese EFL student teachers, to a certain extent, were capable of leveraging digital tools for learning purposes. Meanwhile, the Chinese EFL student teachers expected more comprehensive support in terms of technology troubleshooting, time management skills, self-discipline, and online resource evaluation. This study brought in the Chinese EFL student teachers' voices on their online learning experiences and perceptions in order to advance EFL teacher education programs in order to promote further development of online learning in China.

Keywords: Chinese EFL student teachers, online learning, COVID-19 pandemic

Defense of Dissertation Committee

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