

When Virtual Lecturing Becomes a New Normal in the Post-Covid-19 World: Some Reflections on Course Design and Lecturing for Undergraduates at BISU

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Abstract

The current research summarizes the design and delivering of the course *An Introduction to Research Methodology on Translation Studies* for undergraduates at the School of Interpreting and Translation, Beijing International Studies University from 2020 to 2022.

Key words: Translation norms; Scenic spot introductions; Cultural self-confidence; New era

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COURSE GUIDELINE

“China’s higher education institutions are under the leadership of the CPC, and are socialist colleges with Chinese characteristics, so higher education must be guided by Marxism, and the Party’s policies in education must be fully carried out” (Xi, 2016). Xi Jinping Thought naturally becomes the fundamental guideline for higher education. September 2nd, 2020, President Xi Jinping (2020) called for efforts to promote deeper-level reform and pursue higher-level opening-up to provide strong impetus for establishing a new development pattern. He also stressed upholding and strengthening the Party’s overall leadership over universities and colleges to further

develop higher education in the central and western regions. It called for focusing on local features and pooling education resources to stimulate the endogenous driving force of higher education in the regions. In less than seven months, April 19, 2021, President Xi (2021) once again emphasized adhering to the direction of building world-class universities with Chinese characteristics to serve national rejuvenation as he visited Tsinghua University ahead of its 110th anniversary. Xi (Ibid) said as the new journey to fully build a modern socialist China has begun, the cause of the Party and the country is in unprecedented need of higher education, scientific knowledge and outstanding talents. China’s higher education should make contributions to the prosperity of the country, the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the well-being of the people. President Xi encouraged young people in China to rise up to the mission of national rejuvenation.

By reviewing President Xi’s series of instructions on Chinese higher education, we find that CPC’s general principles on college education are both consistent and scientific. Likewise, the syllabus and course design, lecture delivering and organization for undergraduate education at Beijing International Studies University (BISU) shall unswervingly be guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

1. INTRODUCTION TO TERMINOLOGY

In theories of education, indeed we might observe that various terms on learning and education associated with Internet and modern information technology co-exist with each other, e.g., “distance learning”/ “distance education” (Porter 1997), “web-based training”/ “web-based instruction”/ “web-based education” (Horton 1999), “resource-based learning” (Ryan et al. 2000), “online education” (Kearsley 2000) “open learning”/ “distributed learning” (Picciano 2001), “e-learning” (Hoppe 2007),

“digital learning” (Padilla 2010), and “mobile learning” (Huang et al. 2016), etc. On the other hand, from teachers’ perspective, they would like to adopt the term “virtual lecturing” (Winterbottom 2006), signifying “production and delivery of the online lecture series.” Corpus search also indicates that the collocation has been frequently used in real discourse, which conversely triggers the pragmatic frequency of “in-person lecturing” as well as “in-person learning.” Therefore, the current overview follows suit of Winterbottom’s (2006) term “virtual lecturing.” We delivered our lectures on the platform of *DingTalk* developed by Alibaba Group for the spring semesters of 2020, 2021, and 2022 during the early and re-surge periods of Covid-19 pandemic.

2. COURSE DESIGN OF AN INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ON TRANSLATION STUDIES

This course provides an opportunity for senior students to establish or advance their understanding of research methodology in translation studies. The course introduces the academic language of research and the elements of the research process within quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches. Participants will use these theoretical frameworks to begin to critically review literature relevant to their field or interests and compose academic theses. At the conclusion of the course, participants can:

- a. Understand research terminology;
- b. Be aware of the ethical principles of research, ethical challenges and approval processes;
- c. Describe quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches to research;
- d. Identify the components of a literature review process;
- e. Critically analyze published research;
- f. Compose academic papers under the supervision of mentors.

The methodology course is designed to provide undergraduates with the skills necessary to evaluate the relationship between translation theories and practice. The course content includes an overview of research concepts, ethics in research, literature searches and reviews, quantitative and qualitative research methods and designs, and data collection, analysis and interpretation techniques. When feasible, concepts and problems are addressed by students in research teams through evaluation of published research works. Thus the current course is delivered through a combination of the teachers’ instruction, class discussion, and students’ independent research. Students’ final grade in this class will be evaluated according to two modules: 1) Class participation (6%), class report (24%,

team work needed), and quiz (30%); 2) Term paper: (40%). In this way students must focus on each class instead of relying on final examination or term paper.

The Map: A Beginner’s Guide to Doing Research in Translation Studies (Williams & Chesterman 2002) is a practical guidebook introducing the basics of research in translation studies for students doing their first major research project in the field. Depending on where they are studying, this may be at advanced undergraduate (BA) or at postgraduate (MA/PHD) level. Considering several advantages of the book, the current course selects *The Map* as the required textbook.

Our weekly schedule is demonstrated in Table 1, condensing the 10 chapters in *The Map* into 6 lectures (135minutes/lecture).

Table 1
Weekly Schedule (spring semesters of 2020, 2021, 2022)

Lectures	Contents	Assignment
Week 1	Course Introduction	Summary of the post-pandemic world and the impact on translation industry
Week 2	Unit 1 Methodology & formal logic in translation studies	What is research methodology?
Week 3	Unit 2 Induction & deduction, qualitative & quantitative methods in translation studies	Please elaborate induction, deduction, qualitative & quantitative research methods.
Week 4	Unit 3 Prescriptive, descriptive and empirical methods in translation studies	Discuss major differences between descriptive and prescriptive approaches.
Week 5	Unit 4 Corpus & TAPs in translation studies Unit 5 Synchronic & diachronic, macro and micro methods in translation studies	What are the typical research methods applied in translation studies?
Week 6	Unit 6 Research design and documentation	Design a feasible proposal for your graduation thesis, including research methodology and complete outline.

Methodology could be defined as the study of or the body of knowledge relating to methods. Viewed in other terms, it can be considered as the hallmark or defining feature of a discipline or an approach within a discipline. In this respect any methodology is the site of constant contention, refinement and re-evaluation. An awareness of positioning and its ethical and political implications for researchers has given rise to studies in this area. Generally speaking, there are six research modes: 1) explorative research; 2) descriptive research; 3) predictive research; 4) explanatory research; 5) evaluative research; 6) action research. While if we judge from the logical perspective, there are deductive research and inductive research. In the aspect of data types, qualitative research usually discusses translation phenomena with verbal data, but quantitative research simply relies on numeric data. We select and classify several academic papers to demonstrate each approach and method during virtual lecturing in

order to avoid the tedious, tired and dull stereotype of methodology class.

3. VIRTUAL LECTURING – A NEW NORMAL?

3.1 Background Introduction

Before we describe our virtual lecturing of the methodology course, let us review the background of the current home-schooling and remote lecturing. “Until February 21, 2020 when we were composing this review, the outbreak of COVID-19 already deprived 1382 lives in Chinese Mainland, which surpassed the death toll of SARS outbreak 17 years ago” (Wang & Zhou 2020a). The pandemic caused by SARS-COV-2 started in Wuhan, December, 2019 and virus variants (e.g., Delta, Omicron, etc.) continue to bother in-person learning and lecturing in the past 24 months. Thanks to the zero-Covid strategy, CPC and Chinese Government have protected people’s lives and guaranteed their livelihoods. Under the

pandemic context, in-person lecturing has been shifted to virtual lecturing in the spring semesters of 2020, 2021, and 2022. The interfaces of the software *DingTalk* are illustrated in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

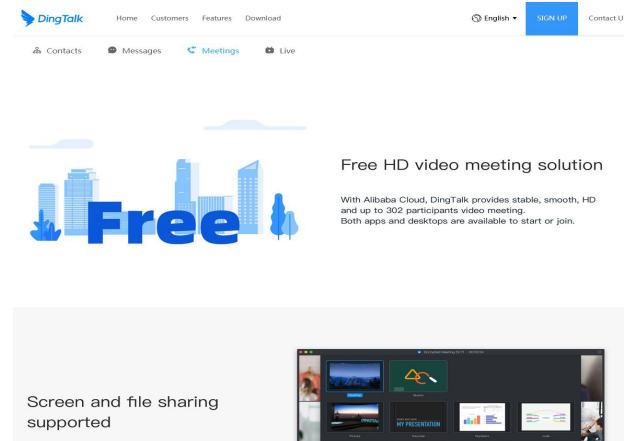


Figure 1
Homepage of *DingTalk* (<https://page.dingtalk.com/wow/dingtalk/>)

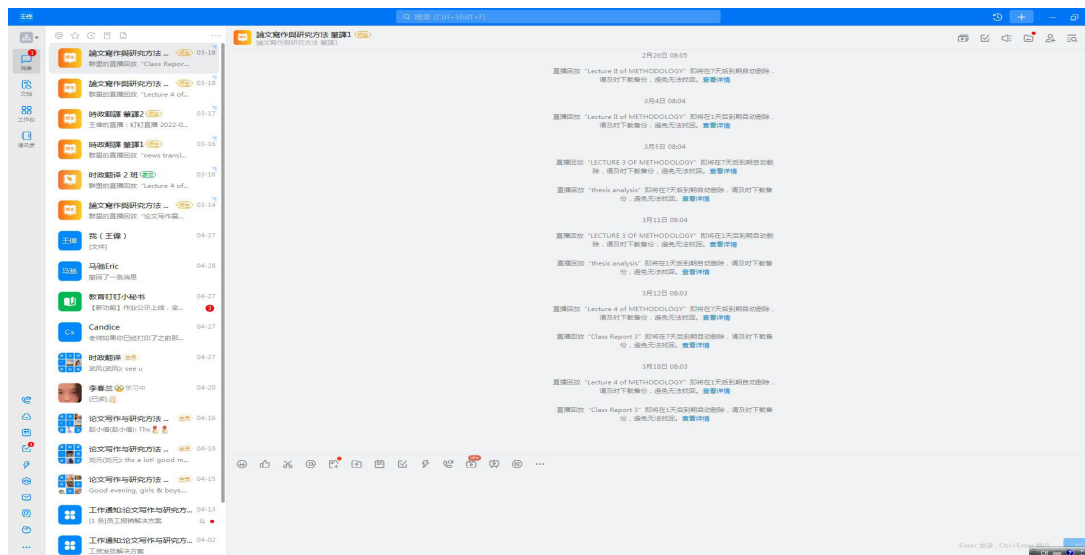


Figure 2
Real operation interface of *Ding Talk*

With the powerful support of Alibaba Cloud, *Ding Talk* provides stable, smooth, HD and up to 302 participants video meeting. Both apps and desktops are available to start or join. The Cloud service also guarantees students to review and re-check key points by replaying lecture videos. The service also facilitates quality assessment of teaching management department. Hence we selected Alibaba’s *Ding Talk* as our platform at the very beginning of the pandemic.

Practicability of virtual lecturing – a case analysis of Unit 2: *Induction & deduction, qualitative & quantitative methods in translation studies*

Generally speaking, each lecture is divided by three sessions – 1) class report (20 minutes): students initiated live streaming and present their analysis of sample

graduation theses on the platform of *Ding Talk*; 2) virtual lecturing (90 minutes): teachers introduced the methods of induction, deduction, qualitative and quantitative and further elaborated them by analyzing specific academic papers, e.g., induction method was elaborated by “On Localization and Standardization in Brand Name Translation” (Zhou & Wang 2018), deduction method was illustrated by “On Lengthening and Explicitation in the Process of Translating: An Empirical Study Based on Translation Tests of MTI Students” (Wang & Zhou 2019), qualitative approach was exemplified by “Standardization of Translation of Rail Transit Public Signs in the Greater Capital Area of Chinese Mainland” (Wang & Zhou 2020b), and quantitative approach was explained by “An Empirical Study of English-Chinese Translation of Novel

Context-Free Compound Nouns and Phrases” (Wang & Zhou, 2018). 3) discussion (25 minutes): students were invited to participate in discussion and evaluation of the methods and approaches on the platform by either video link or bulletin board. Active class participation is required, which is defined as a clear indication of having read and synthesized the readings and being able to discuss translations and interpreting not just through the experience of translating, but also through specific theoretical applications. Students are graded both on content and critical thinking and applications.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE EXPECTATION

Since the present overview is just some sort of summary instead of explorative research, we omit the regular part of conclusion and come directly to discussion and future expectation. Students’ feedbacks about the design and virtual lecturing of the current course were positive, and most of them claimed that the methodology course was no longer tedious and boring. Correlation analysis (Table 2) of the three semesters’ overall performance also indicates that participants’ performance is consistent with their final evaluation.

Table 2
Correlation Analysis

		Performance	Term paper	Finals
Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.288*	.713**
	Sig. □2-tailed □		.042	.000
	N	50	50	50
Term paper	Pearson Correlation	.288*	1	.877**
	Sig. □2-tailed □	.042		.000
	N	50	50	50
Finals	Pearson Correlation	.713**	.877**	1
	Sig. □2-tailed □	.000	.000	
	N	50	50	50

Random interview also implicates that approximately 90% students still prefer the traditional in-person learning. However, the pandemic caused by SARS-COV-2 and its evolving variants are shedding awful lots of uncertainties for the upcoming semesters as China strictly follows zero-Covid strategy. By the time we are composing the current course summary, more than 10000 students are faculty staff of Shandong University have been mobilized for a temporary re-location amid omicron surge in its main campus. In Northeast China, Jilin University announced an early summer break and called its students to shift to home-schooling in order to cut off the transmission of the virus. However, we firmly believe that we will definitely win the battle against the pandemic under the leadership of CPC. Under such complicated circumstances, virtual lecturing or fusion mode of virtual plus in-person learning seem to be the only alternatives left in our toolkit, which could be redefined as a kind of new normal for college teaching.

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