

Assessing the Efficacy of WeChat Check-in Training for Enhancing Interpreting Skills

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Abstract: WeChat has increasingly entered the realm of education, significantly facilitating English learning. This study explores the effectiveness of using the WeChat Mini Program for skill-based English interpretation training. It aims to determine if this model can enhance undergraduate students' interpreting performance on this approach. Data collected through tests, questionnaires, and interviews reveal that the WeChat check-in training effectively improves interpreting skills and is well-received by students. These findings suggest that WeChat Mini Programs can be valuable supplementary tools in interpretation teaching, helping to update content and expand teaching methodologies, establishing a novel networked and mobile training framework.

Keywords: efficacy, interpreting skills, WeChat check-in training

Introduction

Since the debut of WeChat Mini Programs, their versatility and accessibility have made them an attractive tool for educational developers and instructors. Integrating these Mini Programs into interpreting training is particularly significant due to their widespread use among digitally-savvy users, presenting an untapped educational resource. The ease of access fosters a flexible, user-oriented learning environment, while the real-time communication and feedback capabilities enable interactive and tailored educational experiences.

Previous studies highlight WeChat's effectiveness in interpreter training. For instance, Li and Wang (2022) and Zhang and Chen (2021) showed it enhances interpreting skills and student engagement^{[1][2]}. Huang and Liu (2023) focused on its role in mobile learning for interpreter training, emphasizing flexibility^[3]. Wang and Zhao (2021) provided evidence of its effectiveness in learning modules^[4]. Sun and Zhou (2022) discussed WeChat as a Tool for Interpreter Training: its benefits and challenges^[5]. Chen and Li (2023) found virtual check-ins via WeChat positively impact language ability^[6]. These studies indicate that WeChat, as a digital tool, has a significant positive impact on interpreter training. However, there is still room for improvement in terms of sample diversity, research design, and data collection. Further empirical research is needed to verify its broad applicability.

The following research, combining a quasi-experimental design and qualitative exploration, aims to explore the effectiveness of basic interpreting training modes designed and practiced through WeChat check-in training. This study focuses on addressing the ways in which the mini program can be optimally integrated into the curriculum of interpreting studies to enhance the skills of future interpreters. The core research questions include:

- (1) Can WeChat check-in training effectively improve the interpreting skills of undergraduate students?
- (2) Feedback from students on this training mode. Specifically, it includes two aspects: a. Overall evaluation and feedback from students on this teaching mode; b. The effects of students' autonomous learning on the improvement of

interpreting skills.

By investigating these areas, the present study endeavors to contribute valuable insights to the emerging fusion of digital platforms and interpreting education. It seeks to holistically analyze the pedagogic potential of WeChat check-in training in interpreting teaching and provide recommendations for their strategic implementation in interpreting training programs, aiming ultimately to augment the competency of interpreters in today's globalized and digitally connected world.

1. Research method

1.1 Research participants

The study selected 40 third-year English major undergraduates via convenience sampling, dividing them into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received normal teaching plus WeChat check-in training, while the control group received only normal teaching. A pre-test on interpreting basics was conducted for both groups to establish a baseline.

1.2 Instruments

1.2.1 Interpreting skills assessment

Participants' interpreting skills were assessed using Gist Interpretation, E-C Interpreting Task and C-E interpreting task based on Shanghai Basic Interpretation Proficiency Test. The interpretation test scoring criteria referenced Xiamen University's "Interpretation Test Evaluation Form", Chen Jing's "Important Factors in Interpretation Testing from Bachman's Model"^[7] and the scoring criteria of Shanghai Basic Interpretation Proficiency Test. Based on the above three scoring criteria, two professional teachers were invited to assess students' recordings, focusing on "completeness" (60%) and "fluency" (40%), for a total score of 100 points.

Before the scoring process, to ensure accuracy, 9 samples were randomly selected for both raters to score, validating inter-rater reliability using the Kappa value in SPSS. A Kappa value of 0.75 or higher indicates good consistency; this study achieved a Kappa value of 0.806, demonstrating stable consistency. Final scores were the average of the two raters' scores.

1.2.2 Questionnaire

"One of the most common methods of data collection in second language research is to use questionnaires of various kinds due to the fact that they are easy to construct, extremely versatile, and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information and quickly in a form that is readily processable"^[8]. To understand students' opinions and feedback on the "WeChat Mini Program-based English Interpretation Skills Training Model." To ensure the questionnaire's reliability and the validity of the results, we reviewed relevant literature and designed the survey questionnaire. Except the four questions asking for basic information about the respondents, the questionnaire consists of another 11 questions, mainly investigating the two issues two issues: first, what are the motivations for students to use WeChat for check-in learning? Second, how do students practice interpreting after class?

1.2.3 Semi-structured interview

Student interviews were conducted after the experiment concluded. "The interview method involves researchers obtaining data by conversing with subjects to study elements and characteristics related to the research topic. Interviews can be structured or unstructured"^[9]. After the post-test, we selected some students for semi-structured interviews to gather their overall evaluations and feedback on the teaching model. The five pre-set questions were used, but the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask new questions based on the students' responses to gain a deeper understanding of their actual experiences.

1.3 Procedure

1.3.1 Experimental group

The experimental group received WeChat mini program-based interpreting training. Participants accessed the WeChat mini program for a 12-week period, engaging in interpreting activities aligned with their course curriculum. They attended orientation sessions to familiarize themselves with the program and participated in once-daily, 60-100-second sessions.

The instructor publishes practice materials daily at 8:00 AM on the mini-program, with a new topic each day. Students must complete the interpretation exercises and upload their recordings and notes by 7:30 PM the same day. The instructor can download and retain all students' translations and notes. At 7:30 PM, the instructor posts the reference answers and provides Q&A guidance in the WeChat group. The experiment lasts for 90 days. After the experiment, a post-test will be conducted for both the experimental and control groups, using materials from "Shanghai Basic Interpretation Proficiency Test." The post-test will be evaluated in the same manner as the pre-test, with scores classified and analyzed using SPSS.

1.3.2 Control group

The control group received traditional interpreting training without mini programs as tools, attending once-weekly class over 12 weeks. The experienced instructor used lectures, discussions, feedback, and interpreting exercises. Identical tasks and assignments were given to both groups, focusing on gist interpreting, E-C interpreting and C-E interpreting exercises. Feedback was provided in-class, and participants were encouraged to practice interpreting independently. The instruction emphasized the practice process, including preparation (terms and background knowledge), active listening, memorizing and producing. This approach aimed to develop interpreting skills and confidence in interpreting, providing a benchmark for evaluating mini program-assisted instruction.

1.4 Data analysis

The data analysis in this study employed a mixed approach of quantitative and qualitative techniques to comprehensively examine the impact of WeChat mini program-assisted interpreting instruction on undergraduate English majors' interpreting performance. The quantitative analysis focused on the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, while the qualitative analysis delved into the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews.

1.4.1 Data analysis for research question 1

To address the first question, "Can the new training mode with WeChat mini programs effectively improve the interpreting skills of undergraduate English majors?" the research group used a quantitative analysis approach. They conducted pre-tests on 40 subjects in the 4th week of teaching and recorded their interpretations. The subjects were then divided into an experimental group and a control group, each with 20 students. The experimental group used the WeChat mini program for interpreting practice, with topics like education, environmental protection, health, technology, the Belt and Road Initiative, economy, and politics. Each daily topic included terms and a 60-100 second audio file for interpretation practice. Students participated in a 12-week experiment with daily check-ins. After the experiment, post-tests were conducted using the materials of the same difficulty as the pre-tests. Scores of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using SPSS, and questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were held to gather student feedback.

1.4.2 Data analysis for research question 2

According to the experimental design, in order to address research question two, which is students' feedback on this training mode, we conducted a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire includes an introduction and a main section, The main section consists of a total of 15 questions, divided into two parts: the first part investigates personal basic information, including gender, TEM-4 score, and whether they have participated in WeChat check-in style learning courses. The second part focuses on the main content of the questionnaire, aiming to understand the motivation of English translation majors to learn English through WeChat check-ins, and the situation of English major students practicing interpreting outside of class. In order to analyze the questionnaire in depth, we divided the dimensions of the questionnaire finely into 3, that is, internal Motivation for Check-in Learning, External Motivation for Check-in Learning and Issues with Independent Practice after class. In addition to basic information items, the answers to the questions are presented in Likert five-level scale format,

namely "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neutral", "agree", "strongly agree".

We conducted an anonymous questionnaire survey on 53 English major undergraduate students in the third year of our university, with a total of 40 questionnaires collected and 40 valid questionnaires. The subjects of this questionnaire survey are the same as the experimental subjects. Although the sample size is small, it is representative.

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, we conducted internal consistency reliability tests and validity tests on the collected questionnaires. Generally, a coefficient above 0.8 indicates very good questionnaire reliability, 0.6-0.8 indicates good reliability, and below 0.6 indicates inadequate reliability. Cronbach's alpha is a method for assessing reliability, proposed by Lee Cronbach in 1951. In statistics, if the Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire being analyzed is higher than 0.6, it is considered to have high reliability. After analysis, the Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire total scale was 0.815, and the Cronbach's alpha of each subscale was above 0.6, indicating that the questionnaire has high internal consistency reliability.

Analysis software was used to analyze the validity of the survey questionnaires. The results of the factor analysis are showed that 3 latent variables were measured by corresponding items, consistent with the theoretical design; and all factor loadings are greater than 0.60, with the lowest being 0.69. The data indicate that the structural validity of these 3 latent variables is good. This suggests that the questionnaire item structure is sound and the survey results are reliable and valid. The survey results ensure the preparatory nature of the experimental data and the objectivity of the experimental results.

2. Research results

Based on the experimental design, we used SPSS software to analyze the experimental data, and the analysis results are reported as follows.

2.1 Quantitative results for Question 1

In order to investigate whether the WeChat check-in interpreting training mode can effectively improve students' interpreting performance, we collected the data of students' pre-test and post-test, and conducted a comparative analysis in terms of "completeness" and "fluency". In order to prove that the pre-test interpreting level of students in the experimental group and the control group is consistent before the semester, to ensure the reliability of the experimental data, we conducted an independent sample T-test on the pre-test scores of students in the experimental group and the control group to prove that there was no significant difference in the interpreting level of the two groups before the semester.

The pre-test scores were used as the dependent variable, and the group assignment (control group vs. experimental group) was used as the independent variable for an independent samples T-test. It can be found that, in the overall pre-test scores, the control group students had an average score of 60.65 with a standard deviation of 9.09, while the experimental group students had an average score of 62.6 with a standard deviation of 9.92. Using SPSS statistical software for the independent samples T-test, the result was $t = -0.648$, $P = 0.521$. Here, the t-value of -0.648 indicates a decrease in the mean score, meaning that the post-test scores were lower than the pre-test scores. However, the absolute value of the t-value (0.648) is relatively small, which usually indicates that the difference is not significant. Looking at the P-value, the significance level is $P = 0.521 > 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the pre-test scores between the control group and the experimental group. It can be assumed that before the formal start of the experiment, the interpretation levels of the control group and experimental group students were consistent in terms of "completeness" and "fluency". This result ensures the accuracy of the subsequent experimental data, greatly reducing uncontrollable factors during the experiment. It should be noted that although a P-value greater than 0.05 usually means that the difference is not significant, this does not mean that the scores of the two groups are identical or without any difference. It simply indicates that, given the current sample and significance level, we do not have sufficient evidence to prove that this difference is significant.

On the basis that there was no significant difference in pre-test interpreting ability between the two groups, we conducted a 12-week WeChat mini-program check-in interpreting practice according to the experimental design, and then conducted a post-test on the students after the experiment, collected the post-test scores and then analyze the data via SPSS.

It was found that before the experiment, the average score of the control group students was 60.65, with a standard deviation of 9.09; after the experiment, the average score of the control group students was 67.70, with a standard deviation of 8.04. The results of the paired sample T-test showed that $t=-8.318$, $P=0.000<0.05$ level. Therefore, it can be concluded that the average score of the control group students significantly increased by 7.05 points after 12 weeks of teaching. This indicates a significant improvement in the control group students' interpreting performance in terms of "completeness" and "fluency".

We then organized the post-test scores of the experimental group students and put them into SPSS. Before the experiment, the average score of the experimental group students was 62.6, with a standard deviation of 9.92; after the experiment, the average score of the experimental group students was 73.9, with a standard deviation of 8.22. The paired sample t-test results revealed that $t=-11.3$, $P=0.000<0.05$ level. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group students, specifically showing a significant increase in the post-test scores compared to the pre-test scores, with an improvement of 11.3 points. It can be considered that after 90 days of interpretation teaching and supplemented by WeChat mini-program check-in training, the interpretation performance of the experimental group students has significantly improved, with an increase of 11.3 points. This indicates that after the experiment, the interpretation performance of the experimental group students in terms of "completeness" and "fluency" has also significantly improved.

After 12 weeks of interpreting teaching and experiments, both the completeness and the fluency of interpreting have improved in the control group and the experimental group of students. In order to eliminate the influence of daily interpreting teaching on students' interpreting performance and demonstrate the positive impact of the "English interpreting skills training model based on WeChat mini program" on improving the interpreting abilities of undergraduate English translation majors, we conducted an independent sample T test with the post-test scores of two groups of students as the dependent variable and the group as the independent variable.

It can be seen that, in the overall scores of the post-test, the average score of the control group students is 67.7, with a standard deviation of 8.05, while the average score of the experimental group students is 73.9, with a standard deviation of 8.22. The average score of the experimental group in the post-test is 6.2 points higher than that of the control group. After conducting an independent sample T-test using SPSS statistical software, the test results show that $t=-2.41$, with a significance level of $P=0.021<0.05$, indicating a significant difference in the post-test scores between the control group and the experimental group. Specifically, the post-test interpreting scores of the experimental group students are significantly higher than those of the control group students. In the assessment of test papers, the evaluators mainly focus on interpreting skills, using "completeness" and "fluency" as the main evaluation criteria for students' tests. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that the check-in training can effectively improve the interpreting performance of the students, with a significant enhancement in terms of "completeness" and "fluency" of interpreting skills. Of course, the positive impact of the check-in training is not only through data analysis.

This training mode, by addressing issues such as insufficient teaching hours and short training time in traditional interpretation class, combines check-in training with traditional interpretation class to conduct interpretation skills training. It can help students improve their interpretation performance to a certain extent, and also assist teachers in achieving precise teaching. The "check-in training " provides a new teaching mode for traditional interpretation teaching. The perfect integration and application of these two methods can achieve innovation and development in the content and form of interpretation teaching.

2.2 Quantitative results for research question 2

Based on the experimental design plan, to investigate question two, that is, students' opinions and feedback on "check-in training". We conducted an anonymous questionnaire survey of 53 students before the semester, with a total of 53 questionnaires collected, of which 40 were valid questionnaires.

We divided the items in the questionnaire into three categories. The first category is for understanding basic

information, including the items and number of surveys.

According to the collected data, first, in terms of gender distribution, females account for a higher percentage, reaching 80%, while males only account for 20%. Secondly, regarding the TEM-4 scores, the majority of participants fall into the "good" and "pass" categories, representing 37.5% and 47.5% respectively, while the percentages of "excellent" and "not pass yet" are lower, both at 7.5%. In addition, all participants indicated that they have attended check-in learning. Finally, in terms of the time invested in post-class interpreting practice per week, 35% of participants invest over 4 hours, 22.5% and 20% invest 3-4 hours and 1-2 hours respectively, while those investing less than 1 hour and 2-3 hours account for lower percentages, at 7.5% and 15% respectively. These data provide us with a comprehensive overview of the participants' learning situation, which also echoes the interview results. That is, students generally believe that the "WeChat check-in training" has significantly increased practice time and stimulated their interest in learning.

According to frequency data analysis, most respondents showed a certain degree of agreement towards WeChat check-in training. Among them, 32.50% of the respondents expressed a strong willingness to participate in such courses, demonstrating a high level of engagement. At the same time, WeChat check-in learning, as a way to effectively utilize fragmented time, also received positive evaluations from 32.50% of the respondents, although 35.00% of the respondents held uncertain attitudes. In addition, the sense of accomplishment brought by WeChat check-in learning every day also gained a certain level of recognition, with 15.00% of the respondents expressing strong agreement, and 25.00% of the respondent's expressing agreement. These data indicate that WeChat check-in learning has a certain level of acceptance and recognition among respondents, but also some uncertainties and differences.

According to frequency data analysis, we found that various issues show different distributions of compliance. In the aspect of "I can't find a partner to practice interpreting with," very compliance has the highest percentage, indicating that many students have difficulty finding a partner for interpreting practice. Regarding the issue of "I can't find suitable audio materials for interpreting practice," the uncertain option accounts for nearly half, showing that many people are confused about obtaining appropriate audio materials. In the situation involving "I feel embarrassed when performing poorly in interpreting practice with a partner," the compliance and non-compliance ratios are relatively balanced, but still a considerable number of people express feeling embarrassed. Finally, for the issue of "I don't receive sufficient guidance when practicing interpreting outside of class," the non-compliance and uncertain options have a relatively high percentage, reflecting the lack of guidance and the urgency of seeking guidance. These findings provide important references for further understanding and improving interpreting teaching and learning.

Based on the data, we found that the agreement on the impact of WeChat check-in learning shows a diverse distribution. Among them, the statement "I think practicing interpreting on WeChat can achieve learning anytime, anywhere" received a high level of agreement, with 42.50% of respondents choosing "strongly agree", indicating that the convenience of the WeChat platform is widely recognized in interpreting learning. In addition, the statements "WeChat check-in learning can allow more people to supervise me, making it easier for me to continue learning" and "If someone checks in learning with me, my learning motivation will increase" also received a considerable level of agreement, with 32.50% and 35.00% of people choosing "agree" and "uncertain" respectively, reflecting the social supervision function of WeChat check-in learning has a certain impact on enhancing learning continuity. Furthermore, "WeChat check-in learning can serve as a record of my learning" also received a certain level of support, indicating that WeChat check-in not only helps visualize the learning process but may also serve as a showcase of learning achievements. Overall, WeChat check-in learning shows potential advantages in providing learning convenience, enhancing learning motivation, and recording learning progress.

2.3 Summary of the results

The research investigated whether the "check-in training" mode based on WeChat mini program" effectively improves students' interpreting performance through questionnaires, interviews, and interpreting tests. Data analysis showed positive results, with the experimental group's performance surpassing the control group after 90 days. Students responded

positively to the WeChat mini-program learning method, appreciating its convenience, engaging format, and the ability to learn anytime, anywhere. The method also fostered a good learning atmosphere through team check-ins and mutual support, ultimately enhancing students' interpreting skills and learning efficiency.

3. Conclusion

We conducted interpretation teaching experiments using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The results show significant improvement in interpreting skills for the experimental group using a WeChat mini-program-based training mode, with an average post-test score of 73.9 compared to 67.70 for the control group ($P=0.021<0.05$). Students gave positive feedback, appreciating increased autonomous practice time and flexibility. The study highlights that traditional classes lack sufficient practice opportunities, which can be mitigated by integrating WeChat mini-programs. Limitations include a small sample size and short duration; future studies should involve more students and longer periods for more representative results.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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