

# Online Teaching of Advanced English with Tencent QQ Chat

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**ABSTRACT.** *Recently, online teaching has been pushed to the forefront of education, and the major teaching platforms in China are facing unprecedented challenges and pressures. While some platforms cannot fully meet the surge in teaching needs, Tencent QQ Chat software, with its rich and powerful functions, can be used as a complimentary measure to organize online teaching, easily and fluently. Based on factual teaching practice in the course of Advanced English, this paper introduces how to use QQ to efficiently organize online teaching.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Online teaching; Tencent QQ chat; Advanced english*

## 1. Introduction

The start of the year 2020 has surprised the world with so much unexpectedness. In China, as a response to the national call of non-stop learning, the use of network teaching platforms to realize distance education is encouraged. Immediately, online teaching becomes a hot topic nationwide. Most schools are busy organizing emergency training on the use of various network platforms, so that teachers are capable of carrying out online teaching as quickly and effectively as possible. However, it turns out that some of the teaching platforms are not fully prepared to meet the overnight surge of online learning needs, and problems of unskillful operation are sometimes reported. Obviously, the current situation of online teaching has not completely reached the original intention of distance education.

However, in many related reports, formal or informal, we find a common detail that is thought-provoking. Before using various teaching platforms, most teachers usually create a network class group to send such instructional notices as platform login method, class requirements and timetable. And whenever there is an emergency in the course of platform teaching, the very first response of most teachers is to enter that group as a temporary remedy, explaining the failure of the network class or sending reference materials for students to study by themselves. And this group, in most cases, is created on Tencent QQ Chat, which is extremely familiar and accessible to almost everyone, old or young, in China. To certain degree, the detail by itself reveals two facts: first, QQ Chat is available to anyone at any place at any time on any client side; second, most teachers still regard QQ virtually as a tool of extensive social function while neglecting its versatile online organizing functions. In fact, teachers can realize the whole process of online teaching and tutoring in QQ Chat groups through a few steps of simple operation.

## 2. Current Situations of Online Teaching in China

In recent years, with the rapid development of information technology, the rapid rise of online education in China has brought more possibilities for traditional education and teaching. In 2012, the State Council issued the National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020), and the Ministry of Education issued the Ten-year Development Plan of Educational Informatization (2011-2020). These two documents set the direction and provide the guideline for the development goals and tasks of educational informatization (Cao et al, 2015). With the promotion of Internet technology and the support of government policies, online teaching or distance education in China has achieved rapid development and 2013 is called the “first year of online teaching in China” (Jiang & Wang, 2015). According to the data of the 44th China statistical report on Internet development published by China Internet Network Information Center, the number of online education users (teaching and learning) in China has reached 232 million as of June 2019.

With its strong flexibility and autonomy, online teaching has attracted many users and the market scale of

online education in China continues to expand. Meanwhile, many excellent online teaching platforms have emerged, such as Dingtalk, Xuexitong, CCTalk, Rain Classroom, etc. The application of these platforms creates a new form of teaching. With the help of mobile phones, laptops and other mobile devices, online teaching is carried out by audio or video means, which expands the time and space of teaching and provides a freer learning environment. Moreover, the functions of the platform, such as course live broadcast, classroom interaction, course playback and assignment release, can also ensure the completion of teaching tasks and meet the teaching needs. However, due to the large scale of online learning users and uneven distribution of Internet availability, network congestion and system instability often occur, which affects the continuity of teaching. In addition, the new platform interface and multiple function divisions put forward higher requirements for teachers. For some teachers, it is a big challenge to master the new information-based teaching tools in a short time. In the current epidemic, the two problems become more obvious and even impede the progress of distance education to some extent.

### 3. Characteristics of Tencent Qq Chat and Its Main Teaching Functions

#### 3.1 Characteristics and Advantages

Tencent QQ Chat, or QQ for short, is an Internet-based instant messenger software, developed by Tencent, one of the Internet companies with the largest number of service users in China ever since its foundation in 1999. Its typical features include that it can suit a variety of communication terminals, cover a variety of mainstream platforms, and realize a variety of exchange purposes.

The advantages of using QQ to organize online teaching, especially on special occasions like now, are listed as follows.

- (1) QQ software is widely and skillfully used by teachers and students in daily life, with no need of special installation or training;
- (2) With small consumption flow and low equipment requirements, QQ operation brings no extra financial burden to students and their families;
- (3) QQ's strong technological support ensures smoothness even at learning peak hours and in remote areas;
- (4) The user can enter QQ simultaneously on his mobile phone and computer, with information synchronization and mutual information transmission;
- (5) With large upper limit of members, QQ group is convenient to create and member list is quick to expand;
- (6) Group members can easily initiate private chat windows with each other without adding friends;
- (7) With various interaction channels, text/file exchange or transference, audio/visual telephone and audio/visual meeting are easily realized, and QQ mailbox is linked to send super large attachment;
- (8) One-click operation realizes function conversion to QQ mailbox, QZone, QQ music, Tencent video, cloud disk, Wechat, QQ shopping, QQ.com, etc.
- (9) With fast version update, functions are timely added to meet different requirements from different users.

To summarize, with these versatile functions, QQ is qualified for organizing various online activities, including teaching activities.

#### 3.2 Operation of Main Teaching Functions

##### (1) Online chat function

Group members can communicate and discuss on line through text or audio messages. Text messages can be used to check student attendance and follow-up. With small flow consumption to carry large quantity of information and transferrability to text message, audio messages can be used to organize class activities, check-in, Q-A interaction, and homework assignment. Multiple chat windows can be opened simultaneously, used for group activities, for example.

##### (2) Screen sharing function

Once screen sharing is initiated, all the group members can watch the initiator's real-time screen on their own computers or mobile phones. With this function, the teacher can perform real-time lecturing and students can

present reports or flipped classroom. Based on QQ video call, with few standstill or lag and unlimited members, screen sharing has high quality in audio and video communication, providing an ideal platform to ensure the real time and interactivity of online teaching. In addition, this function page and chat page can work in parallel, convenient for students to listen, watching and communicating simultaneously.

#### (3) File transfer function

QQ is efficient and varied in file transfer function, mainly involving point-to-point breakpoint continuation file transference, shared file, online/offline file transference, and so on. Teachers and students can use this function for the distribution of teaching materials and the collection and delivery of in-class or after-class assignments.

#### (4) Video clip recording function

This function can realize the synchronous recording of screen display and teacher's oral explanation, used for teachers to record teaching video or micro-lesson video in lesson preparation, or for the simultaneous recording of live online teaching.

#### (5) Homework function

Homework instructions can include words, pictures, and voice. Students can submit on line, after which the teacher can correct and feed back on line. After revising the draft according to the teacher's comments and suggestions, students may resubmit. In addition, the teacher and students can send messages to each other on the homework page for further discussion, to timely solve students' questions and puzzles.

### 4. A Case of an Online English Class in Qq Chat Group

After understanding and mastering the operation of the above functions, teachers can easily organize online teaching. With her experience of opening three courses on line with QQ for English majors, the author has demonstrated and communicated with colleagues in her university as well as two other universities, with high satisfaction from both teachers and students. One of her courses, *Advanced English*, is taken here as an example to illustrate how to organize online teaching with QQ Chat.

#### 4.1 A Brief Introduction to the Course

*Advanced English* is one of the required and degree courses for English majors (juniors) in colleges and universities. It is categorized as an advanced reading course, the purpose of which is to cultivate students' comprehensive skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, and to promote their practical use of English. At present, there are no mature online courses or references, e.g. MOOCs, Microlectures and other materials, on domestic online course platforms for direct use, which requires highly for teachers to design lesson contents, prepare courseware and organize classroom activities.

#### 4.2 Preparation Before Class

##### (1) Lesson planning

Whether it is classroom or online teaching, lesson planning is an indispensable step. All teachers should design new schedules for the online courses according to current teaching arrangement. By comparison, there is no essential difference between classroom teaching and online teaching in terms of teaching contents, such as instructional focuses, difficult points, texts, exercises, etc. They differ just in organization spaces, overall speeds, presentation forms and teaching aids. In another word, online teaching can be regarded as an extended part of classroom teaching in a different form in another space.

##### (2) Adjustment of teaching objectives

In classroom teaching, the teacher and students communicate face to face, with the help of eye contacts and gestures, so that all the teaching procedures undertake fluently. By contrast, online teaching, with teacher and students separate in various spaces, usually can not proceed as smoothly and quickly as classroom teaching, especially when influenced by some unfavorable factors like unstable network speed or differences in hardware. This requires the teacher to adjust teaching objectives: to change the teaching mode of teacher-oriented teaching in the past, increasing the proportion of students solving problems independently and embodying the teaching principles of task-oriented and student-centered; to diversify the teaching form as far as possible, combining live

broadcast and video recording play, combining in-class and after-class tasks, so as to attract the students as much as possible.

### (3) Preparation of teaching materials

The national call for opening online teaching this time comes when English juniors should pick up Lesson 1 in the *Advanced English* textbook, which is cited as a specific example here. In view of the fact that students do not have their textbooks on hand, the teacher should prepare the text by downloading, scanning or taking pictures. She should also collect some reading materials and video materials related to the topic of the lesson and make PPT courseware according to the adapted teaching conditions and teaching aids. Additionally, with the QQ video clip recording function, she can record videos of some teaching contents and design proper tasks and assignments.

### (4) Creating a QQ Chat group

In most cases, students have had their own class QQ groups ever since they first came to university. Considering that the class group is frequently used for sharing many other kinds of information, it is recommended that the teacher create her own course QQ group. Through the QQ functions of announcement, the text information, the voice information and so on, she may issue in the course group some notices beforehand, e.g. why to create the group, how to use the group, group requirements, and grouping students, etc. She can upload the original text, pre-reading materials, video and other related materials through the function of group files, according to her lesson plan. She can assign preview tasks and appoint Group A to prepare a PPT mini-courseware about the background of the text for class report and Group B a mini lecture on rhetorical devices related to the text for flipped classroom activity.

## 4.3 Teaching Process

The title of the first lesson is *Face to Face with Hurricane Camille*, which narrates in chronological order how the Koshaks fought and survived a disastrous hurricane (a topic that happens to be somehow coincidental with the current epidemic situation), with designed teaching emphasis on rhetoric, narrative structure, and paraphrase. According to the teaching plan and the characteristics of this course, the main steps of online teaching are designed and implemented as follows.

### (1) Organizing class [Chat page]

On the due time, the teacher enters the group chat page, informs the students to be ready by sending text messages, and organizes the first roll call. QQ provides different functions to count members present on line: punch card, solitaire card, and immediate click 1 (which is most frequently used by students in all cases). The three play the same role, and the teacher can choose at will.

The teacher briefly describes the main contents of the lesson through a text message, and then sends audio messages (faster and more convenient than text message so as to save time) to explain further. After all the audio messages are sent, the students are instructed to immediately click 1 to confirm that they have received and understood all the information, and the teacher may lead the class to the next lecturing section. It is advisable that the students not reply until instructed to do so, to avoid the teacher being interfered while sending messages or other students being bothered while listening to messages. A quiet teaching environment is required here on line just like in a real classroom.

### (2) Lecturing [Screen sharing page]

Because the lecturing section has to synchronize the courseware page and all the members' voices, QQ screen sharing function and group broadcast functions are adopted. The teacher initiates a sharing request, all the students click on the acceptance, and all can enter the screen sharing page immediately, with everyone's online status displayed. At this time, the chat page and the sharing page can be used simultaneously, that is, while orally communicating in the sharing page, all can send and read texts, pictures and other information in the chat page. In the screen sharing page, the teacher plays PPT courseware or other documents, and she can start aural teaching broadcast (if necessary, visual teaching is easily available by clicking on the camera). To create a quiet teaching environment in this lockstep stage, the students' microphones are supposed to be clicked to mute. This way, what the students see on their mobile phones or computers is courseware demonstration, and what they hear is the teacher's voice.

#### - Lead-in

The teacher plays a video in the first place, which leads to the topic of the lesson: disaster. She then organizes

a brainstorm, asking the students to enter on the chat page as many words as possible about disaster within a one-minute limit. Among the many words, the teacher extracts the subject word: Hurricane.

- Presentation (Class report)

The teacher asks Group A to do a class report while presenting the readily made video entitled *A Brief Introduction to Hurricane*. The reporter opens his screen sharing page and clicks to unmute his microphone, and all the class can see his courseware display on the screen and hear his explanation. Presentation over, the screen will shift back to the teacher's sharing page, and the teacher may make some comments and organize the next teaching step.

-Text explanation

The main purposes of this step are to lead the students to understand the words and phrases of the text, to appreciate the characteristics of the language and to analyze the organizational structure of the article, with lots of details closely related to the text. The teacher can explain while playing the PPT courseware, or she can use QQ software to record some sections of courseware in advance and play them at intervals in class. The latter is more convenient in that if some students fail to grasp some details or fail to participate in the class, they can replay the recording after class. Each time a session of recording play is over, the students are instructed to click 1, on the one hand to confirm their participation and follow-up status, and on the other hand to remind them of attention. If they have any questions, they can send text messages in the chat page at any time, waiting for the teacher to answer.

-Question-answer interaction

Q & A is the main and frequent form of teaching interaction, which happens not only between the teacher and students in the form of questions and answers, but also between students in the form of tasks. For example, if the teacher asks Student A a question, she will name A and click his microphone to unmute, and then the class will hear a conversation between the teacher and A; if Student B has a question, he can raise it at any time in the chat page as is mentioned above, and the teacher will answer directly or unmute B to ask and answer orally; if students C and D are required to demonstrate, both click to unmute; and if a pair or group task is assigned, the class can simultaneously open their personal chat pages and complete the task in private chat mode with their partners, without bothering other pairs or groups. These various forms of interaction can be used flexibly, to fulfil teaching tasks as well as to ensure full participation.

-Flipped classroom activity

The purpose of organizing flipped classroom is to get students more actively involved in teaching and learning activities and more concentrated on a certain topic concerned. The designed topic for Group B is *The Main Rhetorical Devices Employed in the Text*, which is one of the teaching objectives of Lesson 1. With his screen shared to all, the reporter (acting as a teacher) can explain the definitions, functions and usages of simile, metaphor, personification and metonymy on his PPT courseware. In the process, the real teacher may help explain further and the other students may ask and answer questions. After the activity, the teacher may evaluate the performance and ask Group B to upload their courseware for further and detailed study.

(3) Listening to online songs [Listening together page]

At the end of the lecture and task, the teacher plays a song on the theme of the relationship between human beings and the natural environment, which is expressed by this lesson and closely related to the current situation, to deepen the understanding and recognition of the theme in the form of music. With the function of listening to songs together, the teacher searches on QQ music for *Earth Song* by Michael Jackson and launches an invitation for group listening so as to realize simultaneous enjoyment on their own client sides.

(4) Assigning homework [Homework page]

Homework assigning and submitting can be realized by uploading group files, or more conveniently, by using the QQ homework function to arrange, submit and feedback. The homework designed for this lesson is to write a composition of 200 words on the topic of *What to do in an emergency, such as the epidemic outbreak?* The students will complete the composition and submit it online, and then the teacher feeds back after online correction, based on which students may rephrase or communicate with the teacher, all in this homework page.

## 5. Conclusions

Online teaching, as a new form of distance education, is playing a more and more important role in different levels of education. Its prominence has reached a new height in the current situation, where globally,

approximately 290 million students are in need of it, as CCTV official account reported on March 7, 2020. To guarantee the implementation of nationwide non-stop learning, more studies should focus on the creative application of various online teaching tools, Tencent QQ Chat as one. Here come the conclusions and prospects:

- This paper summarizes the unique features as well as the powerful functions of Tencent QQ Chat. Based on this, online teaching of an *Advanced English* class is designed and implemented, which proves that QQ is qualified to realize online teaching, guidance and interaction.

- It should be noticed that besides the major online teaching platforms, QQ, as well as some other daily social software, is also powerful auxiliary means to ensure the progress and quality of distance education, especially in special periods like now. Thus, it provides a broader channel and a more diverse choice for creative teachers to carry out online teaching, although QQ still has some room for improvement especially compared with other professional teaching software or platforms, in terms of open online course accessibility, for instance.

- Basically, QQ can help fulfil various online teaching tasks. Therefore, it is not enough to just make it a temporary remedy in case of emergency. Instead, it should be further advanced into a regular means of distance education, which requires the joint efforts of teaching staff and software developers.

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