

# Online and Offline Study Materials Synthesized in Motivating English Majors of China in Learning English Literature

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## Abstract

We live in an era in which technology is advanced, with convenient internet-based technology, like Wi-Fi, which enables students to access a variety of online information easily, including some study materials to help learners study on their own without only relying on their teachers for knowledge. Teachers living in such an information age also face many opportunities as well as challenges that past lecturers did not encounter, therefore, the ways students study and teachers teach have changed significantly. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many restrictions, due to the strict lockdown policy implemented by China, making online teaching, learning, and meeting become a common phenomenon in China. Hence it becomes inevitable to get used to a new way of interaction between teachers and learners. In this article, creative pedagogy has been explored and implemented to further motivate Chinese English Majors to take a great interest in literature learning by synthesizing online and offline study materials. The programme adopted a qualitative research design, collecting textual data gained from learners who were readily interactive with their researcher in a distance-education environment to air their opinions on questions pertinent to class contents after learning some American literary writings. After the collected data is coded and analyzed, the program testifies that learners become expressive, cooperative, and fond of literature lectures after being motivated by their academic who made use of both online and offline study materials. This research can be thought-provoking for American literature academics both in and outside of China who are desirous of meaningful and fruitful pedagogy in literature teaching and are keen on strengthening communication and interaction with their learners in class.

**Keywords:** Online and Offline Study Materials, Literature Teaching/Learning, Online Teaching and Learning, American Literature, Creative Pedagogy

### **Introduction**

COVID-19 epidemic has exerted a negative impact on all people across the world, imposing restrictions on people's lives in all respects. In the educational field, both teachers and students have faced an unprecedented and unavoidable shift. The epidemic is not only posing a threat to our health but also "disrupting social order worldwide" (Khalili & Xyrichis, 2020, p. 691). The negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on learners' motivation and emotional well-being for failing to meet their social needs should not be underestimated. (Alger & Eyckmans, 2021) Considering the infection fatality ratio and other aftermaths of COVID-19, face-to-face teaching/learning is bound to "be continued in the online environment" (Kabilan & Annamalai, 2022, p. 1). And teaching and learning have been carried out mainly online, and "the use of remote video conferencing has become commonplace" (Boeren, Roumell & Roessger, 2020, p. 201). The pandemic also provides a big stage for various video conferencing platforms that can finally come to the fore. To satisfy people's needs for online meetings, teaching, and learning, many companies have taken action to seize the precious opportunity to invest in the research and development of online meeting software. In China, there are some popular Webex-like, and Zoom-like platforms, such as Tencent Meeting, Chaoxing, Dingding and so forth. Thanks to an increasing number of online teaching platforms, learners no longer worry about being locked down in a limited physical area and having no opportunity to continue their studies or build a bond with their friends and teachers; academics needn't be concerned about the issue that they cannot carry out their teaching activities as scheduled because they can interact with one another virtually. In March 2020, considering the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic in China, the strict lockdown measures taken by China as well as the risk of halting all school activities, the Sichuan University of Science & Engineering (SUSE) decided to call for all teaching staff to implement online teaching, especially those teachers who were capable of carrying out online teaching activities should shoulder the responsibility. Others who were incapable of adjusting to emergently remote teaching should execute traditional offline classes after students were allowed to go back to school. The School of Foreign Languages of SUSE actively readjusted its policy and took responsibility to implement teaching activities in a virtual teaching/learning environment. Since then, a larger number of teachers have realized the unprecedented, sudden, and urgent transition in the educational field, causing them to have to live with the fact that "a number of challenges and constraints" as well as "opportunities" that wait to be weighed (Carrillo & Flores, 2020, p. 466). Therefore, the lecturers in higher education had to adjust themselves to the changeability and uncertainties of the age, making themselves grasp digital literacy, or they may face the danger of being dismissed. Despite the fact that the pandemic poses no threat to the world, digital literacy, as a basic teaching skill, should be grasped by all academics in case other viruses might disrupt the world order again as COVID-19 did. Hence, the researcher of the article calls for all academics to be fully prepared for future synchronous or asynchronous classes. This article delineates the fair daily performance grading system, concrete and fruitful pedagogy in combining online and offline study materials, and methods of building active communication between the academic and her learners. The researcher succeeded in virtual teaching in foreign literature classes, not only practicing creative pedagogy but also breaking fresh ground by prompting her learners to

engage in communicative activities, enabling all learners to be involved in her literature classes. Therefore, this article would be insightful and instructional for foreign literature academics who are overpowered with confusion and helplessness about how to teach foreign literature virtually and how to communicate with their students when they give synchronous classes.

### **Literature Review**

Before the pandemic, some lecturers who specialize in teaching British Literature and American Literature showed their deep concern about a marginalized plight into which the core and professional courses were cornered. Therefore, they endeavour to think of ways of getting the crucial courses out of embarrassing circumstances, and of ensuring that the courses will become popular again. Some lecturers carried out Multimodality and Multimediality theory in their English literature teaching classes. (Xu, 2012; Zhang, 2012; Wang, 2012; Lin, 2014; Chen, 2015; Liu, 2018; Wu, 2019) Xu (2012) used Multimodality and Multimediality theory to guide his literature teaching to make his learners show more interest in literary works. Chen (2015) and his teaching team built a virtual classroom where “syllabus, study guide, bibliography, teaching experiment, lecture Content, student assignments, in-depth exploration, and teacher-student interaction” (P.93) were posted. The British Literature Online Space won great popularity among his learners, which was verified by a questionnaire. Jiang (2015) was dejected in her article, pointing out that practical courses (English teaching related to business, science, and technology, medicine, finance, law and so forth) thought as a top priority for English majors take large amounts of time and energy of students because the study of these courses can hopefully make students more likely find a suitable position in the job market that needs talents who are proficient in not only English but also other skills. But she was hopeful too, putting forward a creative and feasible way of comparing and contrasting British Literature and American Literature with Chinese Literature to further motivate learners’ interest in literature study because in her eyes, usually being dull, bored, and depressed, learners generally turn a cold shoulder to foreign literature class, consequently refusing to respond to literature teachers, let alone air their opinions. Her pedagogy of comparative literature indeed was interesting and thought-provoking because it could make her students have a deeper understanding of foreign work and become closer to their own culture and literature too. The literature genre covers fiction, poetry, drama, and essay. In poetry teaching, many teaching staff have shown their worry about the endangered status of the course. Cui (2015) studied articles about teaching Chinese English Majors poetry in China universities from the year of 2000 to 2013. From this, those teachers have “justified the value of teaching poetry and discussed appropriate contents for poetry courses and how best to teach poetry” (p. 279). She realized that poetry has become a marginalized subject among courses for Chinese English majors and gave reasons why it has been marginalized. She devoted herself to collecting and analyzing those articles related to poetry teaching in China. However, after finishing reading her article, the only unexpected thing is that she did not put forward some effective and practical measures to vivify the teaching of poetry. Li (2019) used intertextuality theory to interpret her concepts on British and American Literature teaching; one, intertextuality between literary texts. She gave a well-known example of the title of *Vanity Fair* that comes from a market named Vanity Fair in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Therefore, based on readers’ previous understanding of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, readers can easily know the implication of *Vanity Fair*; two, intertextuality among lecturer,

students, and literary works. She expounded it by asking innovative and open-ended questions that enable students to critically think and analyze literary works they read, and to compare them with Chinese ones, hence they can freely and actively express their creative and unrestrained viewpoints; three, intertextuality between different cultures in different countries; four, intertextuality between different visual cultures. She gave a vivid comparison and contrast between *The Flea* by John Donne and *Two as One*, a Chinese romantic poem by Guan Daosheng (1262-29, May 1319), a famous woman calligrapher, painter and poet in Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368). Particularly, she mentioned a hot war & military TV serial, *Bright Sword*, in which the main female protagonist shared with her dear husband, the main male protagonist *Two as One* on their wedding night to tell him that both of them should be faithful and loyal to each other because as a married couple, they are inseparable from one another. She believed that she can vivify meanings expressed in poems. Yet the online teaching problems with which teachers and learners who were going through COVID-19 faced in British Literature and American Literature courses in these articles have been rarely mentioned, let alone think out solutions to them. Some other lecturers both in and outside of China indeed consider them and actively figure out solutions to improve the quality of online teaching. Müller (2006) explored the impediments to “women’s persistence” and encouraging factors that enable women learners to finish their online program. His study also highlighted the important role the efficient and timely and responsive communication between faculty and learners plays in helping students build a strong confidence in persisting in finishing their program. Kuo et al. (2013) found out that “the design of online contents” delivered through online classes can be the most influential factor in deciding whether online learners become satisfied about online courses. “Learner-instructor interaction” ranked as “the second strongest predictor that significantly contributed to student satisfaction” (p. 30) about online courses. Vann (2017) stressed the importance of empathy in “instructional strategy decisions” for the realization of teaching objectives. She noticeably mentioned the necessity of instruction’s relevancy to student’s cognition in helping “adult learners to understand what is in it for them regarding knowledge acquisition and transfer to authentic, real world environments” (p. 239). Huang (2017) analyzed the role of self-media plays in British and American literature teaching, particularly beautifully produced multimedia courseware will help attract English majors’ attraction on classes and make them more willing to participate in teaching content. In order to prove the significant role of multimedia plays in literature class, she designed two types of classrooms; multimedia classroom—class one where “a year of we-media network-assisted teaching” was executed; “non-multimedia mode of English and American literature teaching” (p. 1089)—class two. At the end of semester, after giving the same assessment, students from class one score higher than those from class two, showing that the former has a better studying effects than the latter. However, she did not show some concrete and practical teaching methods based on multimedia and network technology that other teachers could learn from, she just gave some general conclusions. Alqurashi’s study (2018) suggests that in all likelihood, students would be content with online course because online course materials would assist them in comprehending the class content, aroused their interest for the course, aided associate their personal experience with new knowledge, and are easy to search for and obtain. Burke (2019) used “an exploratory case study methodology” to reveal the factors influencing women adult learners’ retention in “accelerated, online teacher education program”. Her study reached the following far-reaching conclusions: (a) positive interaction with instructors, (b) student drive, and (c) program flexibility. In

particular, her study empathized with her learners in that many roles the learners have to play, these nontraditional students with multiple responsibilities prioritize “supportive communication” with teaching staff as the important reason for retention. Hence, “Inconsistencies” and insufficient communication “regarding course expectations and instructors not answering questions were given as reasons” (P. 40) for withdrawing. Concerns about “Interaction and contact with students” when teaching online lie in the inability to keep track of the “progress of students, not having insight into whether students understood the explanation” (Klusmann et al., 2022, p. 5). Chang (2021) shared his successful online fiction-teaching experience in the Education University of Hong Kong during COVID-19, he showed his positive attitudes toward blended teaching, believing new learning and teaching mode gave him a favorably new insight and perspective in fiction-teaching, particularly about training students’ “ability to think critically and analytically” by giving “more open-ended questions” (p. 267). In addition, what is worthy of attention is that online learning serves as a good way of “granting visibility” (p. 269) to many introverted students. Güvenç et al (2022) took some measures to trigger learners’ interest and willingness in taking their literature teaching classes, such as poem-reciting, performance-staging, improvised activities of making a comparison between a video of a song based on a poem and the poem itself, writing tasks that cover various literary genres, especially diaries that enable them to write down their feelings and thoughts, and to have a comprehensive understanding of COVID-19 by self-reflection. Klusmann et al (2022) analyzed the problems and challenges teachers faced when they suffer the COVID-19 pandemic by carrying out a thematic analysis approach, such as an imbalance between work and life, lack of interaction with students and parents, and unclear and delayed school management policies. To sum up, their projects revealed some unavoidable issues as headaches for both teachers and learners, yet they did not give clear and effective measures to tackle them one by one. Therefore, there is still a huge gap that the article can fill in to motivate English majors in China to study English Literature by synthesizing online and offline Study Materials and strengthening communication between online lecturers and learners.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design using Xuexitong through which essay questions closely related to study contents in literature class would be posted after each class and learners could leave their comments to express their viewpoints for data collection. The participants were selected purposefully (purposive sampling) as they were believed to provide in-depth information about the research questions of this study. The criterion for selecting the participants were volunteers of English major students who took the online course of American Literature and were willing to answer questions posted on Xuexitong, an online teaching platform. These questions which were open-ended and closely associated with their course content were designed for prompting learners to have deep and critical thinking about what they had learned from their lecturer’s class. Participants voluntarily took part in the discussion by typing their innermost opinions on the platform according to their own free will because their teacher did not force them to answer them, so if they joined it, which could say a lot about the fact that they indeed pondered these questions and showed their passion for their lecturer’s class, and more importantly they had the strong desire to build a close connection with their lecturer because the lecturer can reply their answers accordingly, and then the communication between the academic and her learners was



interactive and consistent. In terms of the Literature class for which the lecturer was liable was executed as envisaged in a virtual environment in 2020. Then the lecturer sensed that teaching/learning in a virtual environment was a totally different experience, compared with what she had experienced in a traditional classroom. Facing the new situation, she had to take students' psychological activities into consideration before she prepared for her class because this was something both her learners and she had never experienced before. When she delivered literature content online, she had to take into consideration whether students could go online without any problem, what expectations they might have for an online teacher and her online class, whether they were overloaded with piles of homework, whether they could guarantee their attendance, and how to guarantee effective and frequent communication between herself and her students. Many scholars who study online teaching have been sensitive enough to learners' changing situations. (Meyers, 2008; Güvenç et al., 2022)

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

All textual data covered essay questions that could attract learners' attention and trigger their interest in answering them because these questions were closely linked to the contents they studied in their lecturer's class and to the real world to which they could easily and willingly respond. These questions were posted through Xuexitong after learners had studied some writers' literary works, such as a poem, or a novel. Then collected data would be analyzed, coded, interpreted, and summarized in detail to see how learners responded to them, thereby the lecturer could know her learners' thoughts and reflections, finally good communication in a virtual classroom environment can be strengthened between learners and the lecturer by this way.

### **2020-2021 Spring Semester**

The Chinese English majors should take Literature courses (British Literature and American Literature) which are compulsory and core for them. In addition, the number of students in each class was over 30, and usually, two classes combined to take part in the class, that is, 60 to 90 students on average a teacher would face. Considering a large number of students the lecturer would teach, she had to ponder how she would make an unbiased and reasonable grading System to treat each student equally.

### **The Grading System of the Regular Performance of the American Literature Class**

Before the beginning of the course, she would share with her students the syllabus (including the writers and their literature works), course requirements (in particular, the attainment of grades for daily performance which plays a vital role in their academic performance) at least two weeks beforehand, so that they could be familiar with the contents and arrangements of their study. The result of the course depended on students' regular performance (including attendance, involvement and engagement in class activities) and final examination (knowledge-based test), accounting for 30% and 70% respectively. The way students took part in class activities for gaining the 30% grades varied from group to group. Firstly, students would be asked to study and present some writers' works by themselves and be encouraged to be divided into 16 groups with each one in number of 5 to 6 students that chose traditional presentation, stage performance, video-making, talk show on their own

group's will, but the literature works to be presented would be solely ascertained by the lecturer. The following chart is the works for which students should be responsible.

<b>Class Activities</b>
Week 1: <b>Washington Irving</b> — <i>Rip Van Winkle</i>
Week 2: <b>Ralph Waldo Emerson</b> — <i>Nature</i>
Week 3: <b>Nathaniel Hawthorne</b> — <i>The House of the Seven Gables</i>
Week 4: <b>Edgar Allan Poe</b> — <i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i>
Week 5: <b>Harriet Beecher Stowe</b> — <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>
Week 6: <b>Henry James</b> — <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i>
Week 7: <b>William Dean Howells</b> — <i>The Rise of Silas Lapman</i>
Week 8: <b>Mark Twain</b> — <i>The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras Country</i>
Week 9: <b>O. Henry</b> — <i>The Cop and the Anthem</i>
Week 10: <b>Theodore Dreiser</b> — <i>An American Tragedy</i>
Week 11: <b>Ernest Hemingway</b> — <i>A Farewell to Arms</i>
Week 12: <b>John Steinbeck</b> — <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>
Week 13: <b>William Faulkner</b> — <i>The Sound and the Fury</i>
Week 14: <b>Alice Walker</b> — <i>The Color Purple</i>
Week 15: <b>Toni Morrison</b> — <i>Song of Solomon</i>
Week 16: <b>Amy Tan</b> — <i>The Joy Luck Club</i>

This greatly spurred all students to engage in class either in the form of a traditional class or online teaching/learning because learners could access internet resources, including video-editing applications and online study materials to finish their group work, above all, this can be conducive to prompt cooperation and build a close bond with each other, particularly against the backdrop of the COVID pandemic, when some students felt so isolated and helpless. Students would be given 15 minutes to finish this part, and then the lecturer could make a justifiable and objective comment on their representation, more importantly she would give each student a justifiable grade based on their representation mode, content, the coherence of the contents, PowerPoint, students' oral expression, interaction with their listeners, effects of their presentation.

In fact, when students chose stage performance, they would not infrequently forget their lines or acted in a shy, forced, or even more embarrassed manner, the lecturer usually showed her understanding and appreciation of their effort for they were not professional actors, but they still endeavored to show the best result of their group work in such a creative and brave way. Meyers et al (2019) probed into how a teacher who is highly empathetic can have a positive impact on "high-quality student-teacher relationships and student learning" (p. 160). The more sincere the lecturer was, the more likely her students got involved in the class activity, especially after she told them presentation not only served as a perfect way of conquering their stage fright and giving themselves a good opportunity to speak English in public, but also represented a fair way for her to act as an unbiased umpire to give them their score according to their performance. After encouraging them frequently, she found that learners took their presentations very seriously, finishing it surprisingly well. As regards daily performance, the clearer the rules go, the easier the students can follow.

### The Synthesis of Online and Offline Study Materials

When it came to the study of *The cask of Amontillado*, it was easy to access its summary and analysis from the internet, and she would share it with her students so that they could have a better understanding of the implications of the terrifying short story before they were immersed in reading through it. In addition, it was also highly easy to download some pictures related to the story, such as images of “catacombs” and “Montresor’s Coat of Arms” which helped learners understand the plot of the story and could leave an imprint on learners minds. Words that prevented students from understanding the horrification and darkness of the description could be understood immediately after relevant pictures were shown to them. Combining pictures and texts can always successfully yield favorable teaching results. As Hall (2013) described, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, students become familiar with getting internet-based information “in both textual and visual forms”, using pictures in class can make teaching effective and interesting.

To find out whether students previewed the short story, there was an effective way of testing students, that was, to ask them to finish Multiple Choice Questions through Xuexitong (the online teaching/learning platform) within a limited time. Students could not choose the correct answer if they had not read it before they took the lecturer’s class. In order to stimulate them to preview it, she would reward those volunteers who could give the right answer by awarding them at least one point, while those who could not would be punished by lowering their daily performance grade which almost all students cared about, because in SUSE, if one student behaves frequently reprehensibly, like always skipping class or refusing to take any class activity, their teachers have the authority to disallow the student’s chance of taking part in the final exam if they can give sufficient reasons to do so. One of the noticeable advantages of the application from which the lecturer could benefit the most was that she could know the score of each student, the correction rate of each question, and could differentiate those students who made the wrong choice in which questions, which could say a lot about the fact that those who made mistakes in questions that most of the students did not couldn’t have a deep understanding of what they read or did not preview the contents at all, they were in need of the lecturer’s favor in helping them comprehend it and of the lecturer’s encouragement. And also she could check how many students submitted their answers. Frequently, this way of testing students can greatly encourage them to study the story by themselves and the number of students who volunteered to answer questions increased obviously, which made the next stage of analyzing the text easier because students were already familiar with the details of the story. This special online test is highly efficient, but one shortcoming of a knowledge-based test is that it is hard to prevent students from plagiarism which is also the same concern of some other scholars. Güvenç et al (2022) delineated that “Due to possible acts of cheating and/or plagiarism in the examinations and assignments” (p. 60), the instructor endeavored to deal with this thorny problem by thinking out innovative assignments and questions instead of knowledge-based ones with fixed answers. It is fair to say that technology is a double-edged sword.

It is well-known that many excellent literary works have been adapted to movies, even though there are stark differences between them, young adult learners can still be infatuated with a movie and embark on a journey of reading the book on which the movie is based. In a questionnaire designed by the lecturer, there was a question about whether students (the number of interviewees is 60) would choose to read through the novel after watching the movie, 66.04% of students chose yes, 33.96% of interviewees chose no. There are some of



the lecturer's students' responses to the question: "Have you ever had the experience of deciding to read a novel and finishing reading it after watching the movie to which the novel is turned, if you have, could you please tell me your experience with more details?"

Table 1

*After being coded and interpreted through thematic analysis, respondents' comments on the aforementioned question about movies and novels*

Movies	Novels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Eye-catching visual pictures</li> <li>● Pleasing music</li> <li>● Simplicity, brevity and clearness</li> <li>● A wider audience</li> <li>● Beautifulness</li> <li>● Actors' great acting skill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Full of imagination</li> <li>● Unforgettability</li> <li>● The improvement of English proficiency</li> <li>● Detailed information</li> <li>● Difficulty in reading novels</li> <li>● Profound meanings</li> </ul>

Therefore, it is obvious that teachers who occupy themselves with teaching literature can make good use of countless fabulous movies to trigger students' interest in reading literary works and make their online teaching/learning effective and efficient. Particularly, some students showed their curiosity about finding out the differences between a movie and a novel, serving as a detective to seek the truth. This provides a feasible way of assigning homework by asking students to compare a movie and a novel, to find out their differences or similarities, and to express their own comments on the adaption of the movie whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with it, and give convincing reasons why they think so.

Numerous movies, documentaries, and songs can also provide entertaining and inviting resources for learners if teachers can utilize them. For example, when the lecturer taught *Moby Dick*, she found a gripping documentary directed by Jürgen Stumpfhaus and released in December 4, 2015, about the introduction to the once profitable whaling industry in 19<sup>th</sup> century America. The polished video programme unravels the real experiences of whalers who devoted themselves to money-making and adventurous business at the risk of their own lives. The sections about which the audience can remember most clearly include the detailed recording of whale-killing procedures and the introduction to the functions of different parts of sperm whales. From the video, the audience could know that as sperm whales once were the most desirous mammals for their highest commercial value, they almost went to extinction, but thanks to the new discovery of petroleum, their fatal fate could be salvaged. After watching it, students became no strangers to the background information and the relative contents of the masterpiece. Hence, this documentary functioned as an useful resource that helped students understand the magnum opus. Whenever literature academics prepare for history-related stories, they can search for and provide a wide range of TV series or movies or documentaries for their learners to vivify their classes.

### **The Online Communication between Students and Lecturer**

To strengthen the communication between the lecturer and students, she would post some questions for them to answer. For example, "What do you think of death? Emily Dickinson shows her attitude toward death in many of her poems. Such as *I could not stop for*

*death, I felt a funeral in my brain.*” Some of the students’ replies were coded and summarized as follows:

Some students held the view that being unpredictable and unexpected, death is an unavoidable fate all living beings have to face. Yet others believed that death is the bridge to eternal life. After a person passes away, he or she can gain eternal happiness. Some students showed their positive attitude towards death, believing that death is not the end of our life, but the beginning of a new life. They thought that the poetess embraces death with courage and dignity. Being strong and unconquerable, while people are still living in this world, they should do more meaningful things and treasure their precious life so that they can make sure that they do not waste their time. They also held the viewpoint that the poetess shows her ambivalence towards death because in her eyes, death is not terrible, but at the same time she admits that it will bring fear and pain to people. They pointed out that ancient people sought immortality in vain. They also posed this question: what can people do to make those who are still living in this world still remember them? They give an answer to it, that is, like great men did, although they were gone, they are still being remembered by us.

After learning *Moby Dick*, the researcher posted this question “Do you think that human beings have the right to rob the life of animals, because we need them as foods, products, and entertainment, and also because we are stronger and smarter than them?” My students’ responses are coded and described as follows:

All of the respondents were opposed to the statement. They treated animals as friends and the company of human beings because animals can be good helpers for people. They criticized some people’s greedy nature, warning about the crisis human beings will be faced if they take animals lightly. But they believed the majority of people on earth are loving and respecting other living beings. Some showed their hatred and disdain for those who maltreat animals. They warned that we should remember what we have been taught about loving animals as we love ourselves. Some students respected the tradition of carnivore who needs to eat some animals for their survival, whereas other animals should be protected for the sake of ecological balance. Some warned about the necessity of staying away from eating some animals, or people might be infected with contagious diseases, such as SARS. Almost all students mentioned ecological balance. They put forward this serious slogan, we should build harmony between man and other living beings for a better future.

After studying *Beat! Beat! Drums*, the researcher posted this question: “What do you think of war? What if it happened to you, what would you do?” This question attracted the largest number of students who volunteered to post their discussion to express their innermost viewpoints. The fourteen students’ opinions are coded and interpreted as follows:

Most of the respondents, being peace-lovers, showed their hatred towards War, and they could not help thinking about horrible things that would happen to people who suffer in a war, particularly wars would make people without money and power vulnerable and desperate. In their eyes, war is tantamount to negative connotations, such as physical and mental pain, death, misery, cruelty, ruthlessness, homelessness, insecurity, fear, destruction, and sorrow. Therefore, they expressed their unwillingness to join a war. However, if it is necessary and justifiable, they would join a war and fight for their motherland and their people for the sake of independence, hope, freedom, and happiness. In addition, they imagined what they would do in a war. All of them showed their strong wish to be with family members and dear friends and rack their brains to think out ways of surviving in a war. Besides, they had faith in the Chinese government and the Communist Party of China and

endeavored to offer help to empower their country to win a war. Some students analyzed the reasons leading to war. Considering the dark sides of the war, on the other hand, some students believed that wars can bring hope, freedom, and independence. Few students showed their rational attitude towards war, knowing that wars frequently happen across the world. Most of the respondents were proud of being Chinese because China is a peaceful country.

After the lecturer checked their replies, she replied to every student's comment and built a close relationship with them. The special way of communicating between the lecturer and her students is worthy of attention because students were not forced to respond to these questions, she just posted them online and told them that if they wanted to answer them, they could leave a message, if they were unwilling to express their ideas, which could be totally understandable. Also noteworthy were these questions pertinent to the literary works learners studied in their class, and more importantly, closely associated with their daily life that successfully aroused their great interest and made them utter their innermost thoughts and prompted them to exercise deep-thinking of profound issues human beings have to face, which would mean a lot to the lecturer to know about students' thoughts about these issues. Therefore, posting questions that learners have interest in and waiting for students to pour out their thoughts online can be an effective way of getting students involved in a virtual teaching/learning environment.

Because in May, 2020, all students came back to school to resume offline class, so the June's final exam of literature course still obeyed the traditional written test, knowledge-based test.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the fact that presently the COVID 19 pandemic no longer poses a threat to people's life, it once disrupted the world peace, making online meeting/teaching/learning widespread (Lee et al., 2021; Kavarić et al., 2021). Thankfully, it also offers an opportunity for academics to reflect and innovate their current pedagogy to be equipped with capability and confidence in virtual teaching (Teng & Wu, 2021; Lemay et al., 2023). Given the complexities and uncertainties, all students should be treated equally in terms of daily performance, hence this article delineates the concrete and practical steps she followed to reach the target. Besides she expounds the ways of promoting her learners to engage with class activities to the full by assigning some literary works to them, offering her learners chances of learning, sharing and performing classic works with the whole class.

This article deals with the issue of inactive communication between academics and learners in literature classes by offering insightful instructions in ways of striking up frequent, amicable, and fruitful communications between academics and their disciples. The researcher used Xuexitong to enhance the communication between her and her students by posting some interesting and thought-provoking questions that could easily arouse learners' initiative in replying them and writing down their innermost viewpoints on the online learning platform, therefore the academic could respond to every learner's comments accordingly, thus a favourable online conversation came into being. Some learners might find it embarrassing to talk to their teachers face to face, yet the online communication channel can help avoid such embarrassment. Considering the combination of online and offline study materials in literature teaching, the academic exploited some multimodal and multimedia resources to make her literature classes creative, interesting, and vivid. Teaching faculty

should provide pictures, clips of television programmes, movies, documentaries, short videos from social media, and audio resources that have been adapted from literary texts for their learners so that their classes would definitely become exceedingly entertaining, impressive, and unforgettable. To conclude, all measures have been taken to tackle commonplace issues, such as indifferent attitudes of learners, out-of-date pedagogy, and unsatisfactory teaching results in literature classes.

### **Discussion**

The study is about the lecturer's practical and first-hand teaching English literature experience gained from distance education and concludes the teaching procedures she carried out the offline and online resources she accessed, and the favorable teaching results she accomplished. From choosing the writers and literary work that learners need to study to creative pedagogy carried out to deliver productive teaching results and to involving and motivating learners in virtual classroom activities, the lecturer consistently proposed and implemented learner-centered pedagogy. Students' state of mind, cognitive abilities, and level of English proficiency had been taken into the lecturer's consideration. Interesting and gripping multimedia and multi-modal tools, such as beautifully made PowerPoint, pertinent images, pleasing music, eye-catching videos, magnificent documentaries, and fabulous film adaptations successfully drew learner's attention.

The interplay between learners and the lecturer when the former voluntarily took part in replying to the above-mentioned essay question was intensified. Learners' willingness to communicate with the lecturer intensified, only when they felt it pivotally important and extremely necessary for them to rely on this platform to let go of their depressed feelings caused by COVID-19, and when they became avid English literature learners and readers after being influenced by the incomparable value of English literary works.

Nowadays, teachers must live with the fact that the internet is becoming an indispensable part of the educational field. They should be equipped with the skill at teaching online in an effective way, becoming proficient in using popular Zoom-like platforms to fulfill their task because the COVID-19 epidemic leaves us no choice but to adapt to new pedagogy. The results of the study were, to some degree, consistent with the past study in terms of taking advantage of online resources, including "screen adaptation" (Gregório, 2022). As Meyers (2008) realized the favorable results the internet brings us. "Online instruction offers many tools to facilitate communication, collaboration, and the exchange of information, and ultimately helps students to critically examine their assumptions, seek out additional perspectives, grapple with social issues, and create change" (p. 223). This article will help English literature teachers who feel confused and helpless in keeping in close contact with students and feel aimless in designing productive distance education in an internet-based technological world to find this article useful for them.

The study has its limitations listed as follows: one, a creative and trustworthy way of testing online students by having an online final examination of American literature course was not proposed due to the fact that online learners came back to school to have face-to-face classes in the last month of the semester. The article regretfully does not put forward an effective way of assessing American literature learners in a virtual classroom environment; two, the article only covers a certain number of literary works as examples to illustrate the effective method of teaching English literature, more fruitful teaching practices can not be shared due to the constraint space for the article. Further effective pedagogy on British

literature and American literature will be explored to benefit more educators in the same field.

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