



Blended Learning of Consecutive Interpreting Course in Chinese Context under the Framework of Daniel Gile's Effort Model

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Abstract

This research targets blended learning of consecutive interpreting course in Chinese context and is to testify the effectiveness and efficiency of this teaching and learning model. Daniel Gile's Effort Model providing the theoretical foundation, the 3-year practice of blended learning in consecutive interpreting course has verified that students, under this teaching mode, have clearer and more solid learning objectives, are enabled to pinpoint their deficiencies before class, are more concentrated on specific tasks in class, and have more frequent and personal interactions with the lecturer during the whole process. Furthermore, it can be deduced via an empirical approach that students have a higher level of interpreting-related cognition and act in the interpreting process with a more disciplined and strategic manner.

Keywords: *blended learning, Consecutive Interpreting course, Daniel Gile's Effort Model*

1 INTRODUCTION

As a combination of online and offline teaching, blended learning was initially driven by the Internet development and the mounting educational resources online. The higher education in US, as the vanguard of this teaching and learning model, has drawn benefits from it and developed a certain number of well-established paradigms. China's trial of blended learning in higher education can be traced back to 2003 when a Massive Open Online Courses platform was being built. This move signified that blended learning in higher education had gained policy support at its first step. And the fact is that a series of policies supporting blended learning have been carried out since then. [3] Apart from Internet development and policy support, the COVID-19 pandemic also contributes to the popularity of online educational applications. With this momentum, this paper is dedicated to offer a blended learning model of consecutive interpreting course guided by Daniel Gile's Effort Model and prove its effects.

2 THE TEACHING RATIONALE OF CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING COURSE

2.1 Daniel Gile's Effort Model

In the seventies, Professor Daniel Gile proposed the Effort Model for both simultaneous and consecutive interpreting, describing the cognitive effort in interpreting. Gile argues that interpreting comprises four efforts: Listening and analysis(L), memory(M), production(P) and the coordination effort(C). Two formulas were created for simultaneous and consecutive interpreting respectively. [1]

Simultaneous Interpreting:

$$SI=L+M+P+C$$

Consecutive Interpreting (two phases):

$$CI=L+N+M+C$$

$$CI=NR+SR+P+C$$

In consecutive interpreting, there are two phases. In phase one, interpreting requires efforts to listen and analyze, and then to take notes as well as to operate short-term memory. In phase two, interpreting comprises the efforts to read notes, reconstruct speech from memory

and produce the interpretation. Both phases require a special effort, the coordination effort to help the interpreter better manage all these tasks almost at the same time. Based on this model, the multiple tasks involved in consecutive interpreting can be summarized as listening and comprehension, note-taking, memorizing and speech production.[4]

2.2 *The Combination of Effort Model and Consecutive Interpreting Course*

Gile's Effort Model decomposed interpreting process, which is nebulous, into directional and trainable skills. It offers guidelines for consecutive interpreting course design. To be specifically, this course can be organized by the treatment of the major skills of consecutive interpreting, including multitasking, information structuring, memory, note-taking and delivery, in a sequential order. With continuous training both inside and outside class, these skills are expected to be internalized and used subconsciously by the learners. However, consecutive interpreting course is a practice-oriented course which means quantity breeds quality. With limited in-class time, cultivating interpreters who conform market standards is a promise which is hard to make. Yet, the course design in the light of the Effort Model will at least lay a rather solid theoretical foundation for the students and help them to master the scientific training methods of consecutive interpreting.

3 THE BLENDED APPROACH OF CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING COURSE

The blended approach serves as an effective interface between web-based and face-to-face teaching and learning of interpreting skills. [2] This empirical research will elaborate the practice of blended teaching and learning in consecutive interpreting course and prove its effectiveness and efficiency by providing primary data.

3.1 *The Pedagogical Case*

A blended teaching and learning model has been applied in the consecutive interpreting course in a private college in China since 2019. In this college, consecutive interpreting course is opened to the junior students who are in the translation-orientation of English major. The course lasts for one academic year (2 semesters) with 64 class hours in total. In each semester, there are 16 teaching weeks and 32 class hours for the course, which means 2 class hours per week.

(1) The course utilizes both online and offline resources and platforms. The online resources and platforms consist of the followings:

- (2) the national refined course "Consecutive Interpreting" presented by Guangdong University of Foreign Studies on icourse platform
- (3) the college-appointed online teaching platform Chaoxing
- (4) the self-built online subscription Pili English Lab
- (5) the interpreting database of several major official webs

The offline resources and platforms are conventional, including some widely used interpreting textbooks and a language lab. The lab is not a standardized interpreting lab, but it offers the basic facilities for interpreting teaching activities like a display case to demonstrate the lecturer's notes, an installed teaching application to take records of and replay the students' interpreting delivery. It meets the basic needs for consecutive interpreting lecture and practice in the undergraduate stage.

The course is designed and blended in three phases: pre-class, in-class and off-class. Before the class, students are required to watch the appointed session or unit in the MOOC Consecutive Interpreting on icourse. To monitor and test whether students have watched the whole session or unit and mastered the key knowledge lectured in the MOOC, a correspondent quiz is released on the designated online teaching platform Chaoxing. Lecturers of the course mark the students' performance and give online feedback on the platform. Since the theoretical knowledge and the training model of a certain interpreting skill like shadowing or note-taking have been introduced in MOOC, in the offline class, the lecturer will not dwell on the theory part but will start skill training directly and focus on observing, discussing and making comments on students' performance in a specific task. After class, a synchronized personal or group assignment will be issued, and students' work will be displayed in the online subscription Pili English Lab with the comment open to everyone. Students are required to do peer review on this platform. It is also available to the other faculty, interpreting enthusiasts and even ardent parents of the students to make comments on the platform. What is worth mentioning is that the whole teaching and learning process keeps consistent with the content in one session or unit of the MOOC.

3.2 *The Qualitative Examination on the Case*

3.2.1 *Data Collection Methods*

During the blended teaching and learning model, two questionnaires have been issued to the students of consecutive interpreting course at the beginning and ending of the academic year respectively. The questionnaire distributed before the class checked students' existing knowledge, opinions and expectations on the consecutive interpreting course. The other one at

the final of the academic year examined their response on the blended model and revealed their learning experience on this course. Altogether, 113 learners of the course participated in the research and revealed their experience forthrightly. The data collection lasted for three academic years. Because of the developing blended approach in this course, the questions included in the survey varied and evolved to some extent. The common sample statements in the surveys are:

- (1) The blended approach has been accepted and recognized by the learners of consecutive interpreting course.
- (2) The blended approach is more effective and efficient in teaching and learning consecutive interpreting skills.
- (3) The offline classes have general connections with the online MOOC, but there is still room for a strengthened integration.
- (4) Via blended teaching and learning, the learners' interests and academic motivation have been boosted to a large extent.

The latest and updated sample statements are:

Compared with a fully offline teaching model, under the blended approach.

- (1) students are clearer about the objectives of each unit or session;
- (2) students can detect their problems before class and take the class with a personalized focus;
- (3) the chances of lecturer-learner interaction and personal instruction have increased.

Apart from the data collected from the questionnaires, Online quiz platform Chaoxing and the subscription have recorded students' performance data, including the engagement proportion, the lowest, the highest and the average score in every unit or session pre-class learning and some subjective parameters. These data effectively reflect the students learning attitude, mastery degree and personal quality in interpreting course.

3.2.2 Data Analysis and Results

According to the questionnaires, more than half students who take consecutive interpreting course in the surveyed college have no idea about blended teaching and learning before the class. However, what is inspiring is that 91% students are willing to participate in the trial of this learning model. On one hand, the number demonstrates a common quality of the youngsters who are after 90s or even in the post-2000s generation: open-minded, flexible and adaptable to changes. On the other hand, it indicates that there is still a long way to go in the promotion of blended teaching and learning.

At the end of the academic year, it is showed in the questionnaire results that 94% students approve blended teaching and learning model. On Chaoxing platform, nine online pre-class quizzes were issued in 2020, and the completion rate was 94%. And in 2021, ten online pre-class quizzes were issued. Compared with 2020, the rate grew by 5% and reached 99%. The continuously improving model contributed in the rate growth.

With regard to the effectiveness and efficiency of consecutive interpreting course, the most criticized point is the contradiction between the insufficient planned teaching hours and the substantial imperative practicing hours. It is suggested that one should keep at least two-hour interpreting practice within a day to be a qualified interpreter. However, as a pivotal part of interpreting practice, a student only has 2 to 4 class hours for interpreting weekly, which is far less than the essential amount. Without blended teaching and learning model, the class hours would be squeezed even more by theoretical lectures and practice orientations and instructions. In the implementation of the model, the theory and introduction part has been excluded from the class. Besides, by watching MOOC and doing quizzes before the class, 89% students claimed that they were clear of the in-class tasks, and 80% students attended class with specific and personal questions and emphasis. 88% students responded that their questions had been answered in the course, neither in the online or offline way. From this aspect, the blended pedagogy has been proved effective and efficient in contrast with traditional teaching method.

The results of the questionnaires also expose one deficiency in the practice of the blended model—the connection and integration of online and offline parts. In the consecutive interpreting course of the surveyed college, the online and offline interactions are conducted in three ways: 1) pre-class quizzes are designed based on the designated learning session in MOOC; 2) in-class tasks are in concordance with the demonstrations in MOOC; 3) MOOC learning is calculated in the evaluation of students' daily performance. Via the three approaches, the response on the integration results reflected from the questionnaires is not satisfactory. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to check strongly connected/ connected/ no connection on the statement pertaining the interaction between online and offline learning. Among the 113 respondents, only 1 student thought that there was no connection. 61 students chose “connected”. The rest students who were less than half of the class approved the strong connection between online and offline learning. The figures illustrate the deficiency in the practice of the blended approach. By reviewing and analyzing the trial, hypotheses are made for the possible reasons of the deficiency. First, most of the questions in the pre-class quizzes were simply and literally extracted from MOOC without too much scenario adaptation. In other words, flexible application

of the introduced knowledge was not adequately focused. Students may get the right answers to the questions in the quizzes, but when it comes to another upgraded practical problem, they find it hard to resolve. Second, in the offline class, even though the consistency of the training methods with the online MOOC were kept, the lecturer made inadequate deliberate verbal connections between the real-time training and the knowledge learned by the students online before the class. The connections were created on the training pattern but not on the linguistic front.

As for the students' interests and motivation on learning interpreting, the questionnaires also exhibit positive results. Among the 113 students, 78% claimed that their interests of learning interpreting have been strongly boosted. In the most recent academic year, 31 out of 35 students expressed their motivation in learning interpreting, and the rate reached 88% which was 14% higher than the previous two academic rounds.

Blended teaching in the sample college's consecutive interpreting course has been conducted for three years, and it was in the third round that the model entered a mature phase. The questionnaires were updated by adding some statements related to the effectiveness of blended pedagogy. First, about the learning objectives, 88% students said they were quite clear after watching MOOC before the class. Second, about the puzzles in the preview stage, 80% students expressed that they were able to pinpoint and would deliberately focus on certain issues in class. Last, about the interactions between the learner and lecturer, 97% students thought the chances were dramatically increased.

The qualitative examination, on a certain extent, proves the effectiveness and efficiency of blended learning in the course of consecutive interpreting. The proportion and the rising rate displayed in the questionnaires have sent an optimistic signal to the learners, lecturers and scholars in interpreting.

3.3 The Quantitative Examination on the Case

3.3.1 Data Collection Methods

In order to test the effectiveness of blended learning from a statistical perspective, this research collected the test scores of the students before and after participating in blended learning. The students in this teaching case had been trained sentence interpreting in Grade Two of the college, so they had the general capacity to attend an interpreting test before the class. The pre-test and post-test are both interpreting tests which comprise English-to-Chinese and Chinese-to-English interpretation. The lecturer will mark the performance of the participants in the two tests. [5]

3.3.2 Data Analysis and Results

For both subjective and objective incompleteness of the first-round and third-round blended teaching trial, the statistics being analyzed are from the second round with 30 samples in total. The quantitative examination is conducted by using SPSS 23, and the analyzing method is paired samples test. The results are unveiled in the following tables.

Table 1: Tests of Normality on the Paired Samples Statistics of the Pre-test and Post-test in 2020-2021 Academic Year

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
pretest	.124	30	.200*	.983	30	.894
posttest	.162	30	.043	.948	30	.154

Table 2: Paired Samples Statistics of the Pre-test and Post-test in 2020-2021 Academic Year

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 posttest	82.3333	30	4.61880	.84327
pretest	77.3917	30	5.91305	1.07957

Table 3: Paired Samples Test of the Pre-test and Post-test in 2020-2021 Academic Year

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 posttest - pretest	4.94167	5.27506	.96309	2.97193	6.91141	5.13129	.000	

In 2020-2021 academic year, it is showed in Table 1 that students' test scores have achieved normality. Thus, it meets the conditions of paired samples test. In the paired samples test, the mean of the posttest is 82.33 and is 4.94 higher than the pretest mean (77.39). Table 3 shows that $p < 0.05$, which implies the difference of the post-test and pre-test is statistically significant. In other words, blended learning in consecutive interpreting course is tested to be effective on improving students' performance in examinations.

4 CONCLUSION

This research is an empirical study of blended learning and combines qualitative and quantitative analyzing methods. It provides a practical model of blended learning for Consecutive Interpreting course guided by Gile's interpreting theory, and proves the model's feasibility and validity. Via the data offered and analyzed in this research, it can be verified that blended teaching is very helpful for the students and very effective and efficient for the people who are involved in interpreting teaching process.

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