

# Construction of “Online, Offline and In-class” Model in Business English Teaching in the Networked Era\*

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**Abstract**—Business English teaching in colleges and universities all over China is undergoing great changes with the rapid advance of Internet technology and dynamic progress of education informatization. Thus the teacher-dominated way of teaching in the traditional education environment is inevitably under serious challenge. Through an in-depth analysis of the current development of Business English teaching in this networked era, the author puts forward that innovation of Business English teaching model must take full advantage of the Internet platform and information technology, break the traditional concept of teaching, implement creative ways of instruction, and integrate online, offline, and in-class learning into an effective whole with a view to enhancing the level of Business English teaching.

**Keywords**—“online, offline and in-class”; Business English; teaching model; networked era

## I. INTRODUCTION

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang proposed the concept “Internet Plus” for the first time in his report on the work of the government in the year of 2015, which aroused widespread concern in China. The so-called “Internet Plus” refers to the idea that the prosperous development of traditional industries should be dependent on the Internet. To be specific, new and creative development pattern should be established through employing information technology and Internet platform to the utmost. In order to fit in with the needs of the “Internet Plus” and promote the application of information technology to the field of education China’s Ministry of Education has made and issued two important educational plans in October 2015 and February 2016. The titles of the two plans are as follows: Innovative Development Plans of Higher Vocational Education (2015-2018) and Key Points in Promoting Education Informatization (2016).

As the Internet technology is developing increasingly fast, coupled with the advent of the concept “Big Data”, the traditional education ideas and teaching models have been impacted seriously due to the wide popularity of mobile phones as well as the sharing of online learning resources. In recent years, some network-based teaching models, such as flipped learning, blended learning, MOOC, SPOC, and micro-course, have made both teachers and students curious and delighted. It

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is an inevitable responsibility for teachers of foreign language to accept the challenges brought by those new and creative teaching models in such a networked era. Meanwhile, the rapid and dynamic development of Internet technology also provides opportunities for teachers’ reform of the current situation of Business English teaching in both theory and practice. In China, the reform of Business English teaching can be implemented from the following four aspects: (1) change of teaching ideas, (2) creation of teaching models, (3) optimization of teaching methods, and (4) scientific assessment of teaching performance. The author believes that the reform and innovation of Business English teaching model must be carried out without hesitation under the support of information technology and Internet platform. In the field of Business English teaching, continuous progress and comprehensive innovation can be made and guaranteed through the construction of the “online, offline and in-class” teaching model and rational use of learning resources on the Internet.

## II. CURRENT SITUATION OF BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHING

With the increasing acceleration of economic globalization, China has quickened its step in foreign trade. At the same time, cross-cultural communication is becoming more frequent than before. As a result, recent years have witnessed an unprecedented growth in the demand for applied talents proficient in Business English. However, the current development of Business English education cannot keep pace with the advance of social economy and cultural communication. Therefore, graduates majoring in Business English are unable to satisfy the requirements of society and market. The current situation of Business English teaching in China can be summarized as following: the traditional teaching environment and outdated teaching model cannot cultivate so many qualified Business English graduates to meet the needs of the future decades. Based on this situation, some of the famous scholars in the field of second language teaching, such as Wang Shouren, Wang Lifei, Ye Xingguo, Wu Zhongjie and Zeng Yongqiang, came up with effective strategies and solutions to the new problems existing in the networked era. Their profound and professional insights contributed to the informatization process of Business English teaching, deserving the serious consideration of foreign language teachers and second language learners.

First of all, under the traditional social and educational system of China, teachers serve as the role of teaching,

preaching and imparting and they enjoy a much higher reputation than people working in other professions. But this kind of brilliant image is seriously challenged due to the typical features (such as explosion of information, rapidity of communication, etc.) of this networked era. Let's put it more specific. On the one hand, obviously, the knowledge hierarchy of a common teacher is so "weak" if compared with the sea of information online. And generally speaking, in China, teachers are less advantaged groups in the proficient use of IT-related or network-based teaching aids and software. So today, teacher's role of knowledge imparting is relatively weakening. On the other hand, nowadays surfing on the Internet has become a lifestyle for most students. This means that they are able to acquire knowledge and get information in many diversified ways and with great convenience. This circumstance raises a new question which deserves serious consideration: how to be a successful teacher in this networked era? Wang Shouren held the opinion that foreign language teachers should catch the chance of transition and strive to be a lifetime learner and innovator under the tendency of education informatization [1]. Wang Lifei believed that Business English teachers are required to be proficient in language, familiar with information technology as well as international in perspective [2]. From the discussion above, it is clear that a higher level is demanded for the comprehensive abilities of foreign language teachers.

Secondly, teaching activities occurring in the traditional classroom take up less amount of time due to the extensive spread of online resources and increasing popularity of online learning. Under this circumstance, many educators and teachers are exploring how to improve teaching methods and enhance effectiveness in a 45-minute class. This issue has been widely discussed and studied among experts and scholars in the field of Business English teaching. In July 2015, at the Workshop of Business English Teaching Design held by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Ye Xingguo encouraged young teachers to employ ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in their teaching practice. They were strongly advised to make full use of MOOCs, SPOCs, and micro-courses so as to promote the effective combination between information technology and Business English teaching [3]. Furthermore, Wu Zhongjie analyzed the importance of flipped learning or blended learning in depth. He also elaborated on the necessity of implementing the model of PBL (Project-based Learning) in teaching activities [4]. To be brief, the above-mentioned innovative teaching models assisted by information technology can provide brand-new ways for the improvement of the quality of Business English teaching.

Thirdly, the rapid development of Internet technology is transforming the environment and style of learning. In China, the new learning ecosystem is being gradually established to adapt to the network-based learning trend. Recently, many scholars have been discussing how to evaluate the learning outcomes of students in a scientific and effective way, given that the learning environment is becoming complex and the learning style is getting diversified in this networked era. Li Qinghua and Zeng Yongqiang held the opinion that students' performance should be evaluated through a multidimensional assessment system if their learning activities take place both online and offline [5]. Within the multidimensional

system, portfolio assessment is a good way for teachers to supervise students' performance during a certain period of time. Besides, a combination of self-assessment, peer feedback, and teachers' evaluation can also be considered as an effective way to assess the learning outcomes of students. By adopting the multidimensional assessment system students cannot only receive objective feedback from teachers and peers, but also identify their advantages and disadvantages in comparison with others. And it is expected that both teachers and students should make a quick adjustment to teaching methods as well as learning strategies according to the present performance in learning.

From the discussion above we can conclude that the "online, offline and in-class" Business English teaching model is definitely needed to promote the integration between Internet technology and Business English teaching. The author believes that in this networked era Business English teaching should first and foremost make full use of the advantages of Internet platform and information technology. Besides, the varied demands raised by the society and regional economy should also be taken into full consideration. As for Business English teachers, they must be equipped with the teaching ideas and methods in accordance with international standards. The construction of the "online, offline and in-class" Business English teaching model will be expounded in the following part.

### III. CONSTRUCTION OF "ONLINE, OFFLINE AND IN-CLASS" MODEL IN BUSINESS ENGLISH TEACHING

In order to promote the effective combination and deep integration of Internet technology and Business English teaching, it is imperative to construct the "online, offline and in-class" model and apply it in teaching.

The construction idea of the "online, offline and in-class" teaching model is shown in the following "Fig. 1".

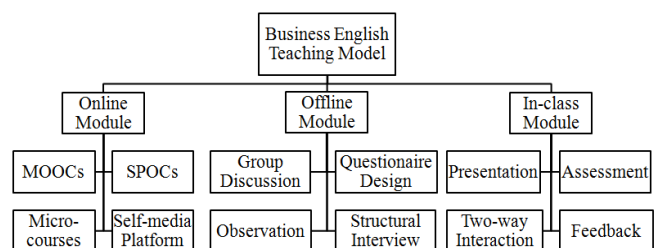


Fig. 1. "Online, offline, and in-class" Business English teaching model.

#### A. Online Module: Focusing on Integration, Generation and Sharing of High-quality Online Learning Resources

Firstly, introduce Business English majors MOOCs or other network-based courses with high learning rate and share rate, so that students can study online autonomously and complete the learning tasks and tests as required by the online courses. Secondly, set up a teaching team proficient in information technology. By integrating quality online learning resources, teachers are able to create SPOCs for students in colleges and universities. And members in the team are also required to make excellent micro-courses for students to study in depth based on important and difficult points in teaching. Thirdly, create a self-media platform, e.g. WeChat learning community.

Students are strongly recommended to use the resources such as videos and transcripts released in the learning community on a regular basis.

In short, this module aims to cultivate students' awareness of autonomous learning as well as ability of network learning. Students can make full use of fragmented time, choose personalized and diversified content according to their learning goals, personal needs, and language skills, make their learning plans in a scientific and reasonable way, complete scheduled tasks, and share learning experience and gains online [6].

*B. Offline Module: Focusing on Design and Implementation of Research-based and Collaborative Learning Activities*

Research-based and collaborative learning activities are carried out in groups through adopting PBL learning mode [7]. Generally speaking, five or six students form a research team. In each team, one student is chosen as the leader and the other members take turns to be the chair. After full discussion and communication among members of the team, research projects closely related to the content of courses should be worked out under the guidance of teachers. Then the leader will instruct other team members to accomplish scheduled tasks in their spare time based on scientific research methods. Finally the research outcomes will be displayed, discussed, shared and reviewed in the classroom. Research-based learning activities are mainly carried out in the following steps "Fig. 2":

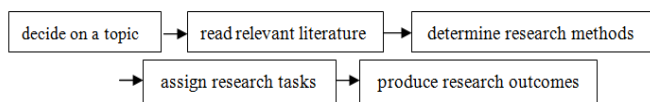


Fig. 2. Steps of research-based learning activities.

To sum up, this module can help to enhance students' sense of teamwork and train students' abilities to raise questions and solve problems. By conducting or participating in project-based learning activities, each student will have the opportunity to understand and know the process of project management, the procedures of project implementation as well as the basic steps of academic research.

*C. In-class Module: Focusing on Application of Interactive Learning Method and Implementation of Multidimensional Formative Assessment*

In-class module advocates good communication and interaction between teachers and students and among students. Interactive learning overturns the traditional teacher-dominated way of teaching. In recent years, with the innovation of educational philosophy, China has witnessed the change of teachers' identity from a dominator of teaching activities to an instructor of learning activities. Today in China, classroom teaching is mainly focused on the explaining of important or difficult points in the textbook so that the amount of time spent on classroom instruction can be reduced accordingly. In this case, students will become the initiator or dominator of learning activities. They actively preside over or participate in various learning tasks rather than accept the tasks passively. The reversal of classroom roles for teachers and students is fundamentally helpful to cultivate students' ability to study

autonomously and consciously. Interactive learning activities are carried out in the following steps "Fig. 3":

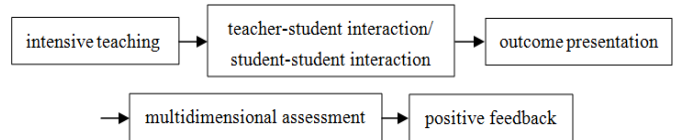


Fig. 3. Steps of interactive learning activities.

This module is conducive to promoting two-way interactive learning. The two-way interaction, outcome presentation, teachers' evaluation and peers' feedback are all carried out in a purely English learning environment so that it can well promote the development of students' language ability. Positive and encouraging feedback should be given to students through multidimensional formative assessment, the aims of which are to strengthen students' beliefs about autonomous learning and interactive learning, correct errors in time according to the feedback from class and to ensure continuity and effectiveness of knowledge acquisition [8].

In conclusion, compared with traditional teaching model, the "online, offline and in-class" teaching model based on the Internet platform has the following three advantages. Firstly, it can give full play to the advantages of information technology and Internet platform, make full use of quality online resources in Business English teaching and lay a solid foundation for large-scale application and popularization in the later stage. Secondly, it can promote the transformation from traditional learning ecosystem to network-based learning ecosystem and achieve the effective continuation from the first class (traditional face-to-face classroom) to the second class (modern network-based classroom) to make sure that students acquire knowledge in a sustainable way. Thirdly, the improvement of the learning environment, the enrichment of learning resources, the transformation of learning styles and the expansion of learning paths all help to cultivate students' ability in autonomous learning and their awareness in cooperative learning, thus making Business English teaching more effective, practical and challenging to a greater extent.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the discussion above we come to a conclusion that the "online, offline and in-class" model in Business English teaching can effectively solve the problems of dull learning environment, limited learning resources, narrow access to knowledge and lack of interactive learning experience. Moreover, it can also effectively improve the current situation of Business English teaching which emphasizes input while ignoring output and consumes more time with poor effect. What is more important is that the deep integration of Internet technology and Business English teaching has fundamentally promoted the gradual transformation from the traditional teaching model to the new teaching mode and maximized the effectiveness and practicability of Business English teaching. To make a long story short, the "online, offline and in-class" teaching model has promoted the building of "three classrooms" (i.e. online classroom, offline classroom, face-to-face classroom) and got rid of the disadvantages of the traditional teaching model in essence, thus it can help to

cultivate students' abilities in autonomous learning, language application and academic research.

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