

# A Study on Blended Modes for College English Teaching Based on MOOCs

Liu Yujie

Jilin University of Finance and Economics

Changchun, China

hope\_138@hotmail.com

**Abstract**— Blended learning in higher education is the basic mode preferred by both teachers and students. With the rapid development of MOOCs, teachers are exploring the ways to make use of MOOCs to create an effective blended learning strategies. However, specific attention for the general blended modes for college English teaching still scarce. Therefore, this study explores the basic requirements on blended teaching based on MOOCs, aiming to establish a blended mode for college English teaching based on MOOCs. The mode consists of three major parts: Input by online learning; output through classroom practice and discussion and after-class reflection and consolidation. The configuration and practice of college English blended teaching modes help to solve the problem that students are not so capable of autonomous learning and motivate students to think critically.

**Keywords**— *Blended learning, MOOCs, College English teaching*

## I. INTRODUCTION

MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) has evolved into a new way of teaching in higher education all over the world. There are many well-known universities in the world, including China, which have successively developed online courses open to global learners. An international allied organization of open educational resources has been established. The most popular ones are Coursera, edX, Udacity, etc.. It is reported that millions of learners around the world participate in various MOOC learning (Ross & Gage, 2006). Many domestic universities have introduced or are introducing MOOCs to the exploration of blended teaching mode, including “University Course Sharing Center” in Shanghai, University Course Sharing Alliance between the east and the west, Tsinghua “School Online”, and ewant. At present, some colleges and universities including Tsinghua University and National University of Defense Technology have begun a new attempt to blend traditional classroom teaching with MOOCs. The teachers perform both classroom instruction and the role of counselor in the relevant MOOC courses (Du, 2016). In Hubei Province, the Hubei Teacher Education Network Alliance led by Huazhong Normal University has attracted more than 20 colleges and universities participating in the development of large-scale online courses.

From the perspective of development patterns and trends, MOOC education has four distinct characteristics compared with previous network distance education and traditional higher education: one is a large-scale and open teaching boundary; the other is a low-cost, easy-to-access teaching method; the third one is the teaching content of focusing on demand and individualization; and the fourth is the multi-dimensional and personalized teaching orientation (Dai & Li, 2015). MOOC learning is triggering the fundamental changes in the traditional learning patterns of colleges and universities and the major changes in the individual learning styles in the society. It does not only pose huge challenges to and exert profound impact on educational and technical means, but also intensely influences and challenges educational concepts, institutional methods and talent training processes. The blended teaching mode based on MOOCs will be the development direction of college English teaching reform.

## II. DEVELOPMENT OF BLENDED LEARNING AND MOOCs

Blending Learning has become a major trend in the field of education with the rise of MOOCs (Griffiths, Mulhern, Spies & Chingos, 2015). The original meaning of blended learning is mixed learning or combined learning, that is, the combination of various learning methods, such as the use of audio-visual media (slide projection, audio and video) learning methods combined with the traditional learning methods using chalk and blackboard, the combination of Computer-aided learning methods with traditional learning methods, and the combination of self-learning methods with collaborative learning methods (Meyen, Aust & Gauch..., 2002; Holotescu, Grosseck, Cre u, & Naaji, 2014). With the deepening of research and the development of technology, the academic community has more controversies about the concept of blended learning - some scholars believe that blended learning is combination of Face-to-Face Learning and Online Learning. Some scholars believe that blended learning is a mixture of cognitivism, behaviorism, and constructivism; some scholars believe that blended teaching emphasizes a mixture of multiple teaching media; some scholars believe that blended learning is “A mixture of teaching-centered” and “student-centered” teaching models; and still other scholars believe that blended learning is a mixture of face-to-face learning, self-paced learning, and online collaborative learning (McKenzie, Perini, Rohlf, Toukhsati, Conduit & Sanson, 2013). This study believes that the following definitions of blended learning are more representative: the so-called blended teaching is to combine the advantages of traditional teaching methods with the advantages of digital or networked teaching mode. That is to say, teachers have to play a leading role in inducing, inspiring and monitoring teaching processes, while students, as the principal part in learning processes, will have to show their initiative, enthusiasm and creativity. At present, the consensus reached by the international educational technology community is that only by combining the teaching of teachers with the

learning of students to make their advantages complemented with each other, can the best learning effect be obtained as expected (Owston, York & Murtha, 2013).

The spread and development of MOOCs has attracted the attention of domestic universities, and some colleges have developed their own MOOC platform or courses. In April 2013, China's East-West University Curriculum Sharing Alliance was formally established in Chongqing University; up to June 2016, the alliance had involved 99 colleges and universities. In October 2013, the Chinese MOOC platform launched by Tsinghua University, named "School Online", began to operate. Currently, the platform provides more than 200 institutions including Tsinghua University, Peking University, Harvard University and Stanford University with more than 1,300 courses

In April 2014, the "Good University Online"--- a learning platform developed by Shanghai Jiaotong University began to operate. The platform included 30 self-built courses and 10 courses from Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Hsinchu University in Taiwan. In May 2014, the "Chinese University MOOC" --- a learning platform co-founded by NetEase and Love Course website promoted the small private online course (SPOC) to users; in the same month, Shenzhen University initiated "National university UOOC alliance", where 108 colleges and universities joined and signed a cooperation agreement .

With the booming of MOOCs initiated by the higher educational institutions, the "National Quality Video Open Course" and the "National Quality Resource Sharing Course" promoted by the Ministry of Education are also new explorations and attempts in the field of online education. According to data from iResearch and China Statistics Bureau, the market size of online education in China in 2013 was 83.97 billion, rising up by 19.9% year-on-year. The number of online users was 67.2 million, up 13.8% year-on-year; in 2016, it reached 1437.2 billion, expected to be 1733.9 in 2017. The development of MOOCs has created new conditions and environment for blended teaching.

### III. REQUIREMENTS ON BLENDED TEACHING BASED ON MOOCs

#### A. Strict Evaluation Criteria

The Internet has greatly enriched the way humans communicate. For students, the Internet fundamentally breaks the limitations of learning in terms of time and space. The location of students' classes is no longer limited to the classroom, and the diversity of the learning environment is conducive to students' personalized learning process and personalized development. For teachers, teaching will no longer be subject to specific time and space, and does not have to be subject to the capacity of the classroom also (Boelens, Voet, Michiel & Wever, 2018). Therefore, the Internet frees teachers from the podium, and also frees students from the classroom, and the teaching environment extends from offline to online. However, the change of the learning environment does not mean that the teaching evaluation standard is lowered. Students have more choices in the learning environment and still have to face the same standard assessment as the traditional classroom. Therefore, the evaluation criteria will be more strict.

#### B. Highlight the Core Content

While breaking the limitations of learning time and space, the Internet also brings great freedom to learners in the choice of knowledge. It has the characteristics of individualization, fragmentation and fast food: First, the initiative of learners in the choice of educational resources is further strengthened. The weakness that traditional teaching restricts learners to specific classrooms, specific teachers, and specific teaching content will be less and less critical, and in a blended way, the learners can actively choose according to their own wishes and learning conditions. Second, the popularity of the Internet and mobile terminals makes it easy for learners to use the piecemeal time to study anywhere and anytime. Finally, the increasingly accelerated social rhythm and the characteristics of the information explosion in the modern time make people's learning demand for short cycle and high quality increase, and the MOOC courses meet people's need of learning in way of fast food, enabling learners to achieve more learning outcomes in as little time as possible (Bralić, & Divjak, 2016). However, changes in the learner's learning behavior will not lead to changes in the core content of the teaching. Only the flexible online courses rich in content carefully designed by the educators, can be better absorbed and learned by the learners.

#### C. Improve Teaching Preparation

In the era of "Internet +", learners are increasingly enriched with access to knowledge resources, making classroom learning no longer the only way of getting knowledge; at the same time, learning methods have become more colorful: autonomous learning, self-organizing learning, online learning, cooperative learning, mobile learning, blended learning, flipped learning, etc.(Graham, 2013). The application of these teaching modes breaks the inherent thinking of traditional education. Students study at home, solve problems in the classroom, or conduct online education for general education and offline courses to carry out special extended counseling, so that the process of knowledge learning is singular but flexible, and the uniqueness of learners has been effectively cultivated. However, changes in the teaching mode do not mean that teachers can pay less attention to lesson preparation. On the contrary, a more flexible teaching mode requires teachers to have a wider knowledge reserve and more adequate teaching preparation. From this point of view, the development of MOOCs is both opportunities and challenges for teachers today.

#### D. Diversify Teaching Objectives

As the educational model changes, the educational philosophy is also changing. At the graduation ceremony for post-graduates of Tsinghua University, the president Chen Jining once said: The growth of a person does not lie only in the

knowledge and ability, but more importantly, in the value orientation and personality such as courage, perseverance, self-confidence and teamwork. Education is the cultivation of people. Education in modern society is not only to teach knowledge, but more importantly, to let students know how to learn, how to deal with problems, and how to face difficulties. Therefore, only the “three-in-one” training mode that combines the three characteristics of value shaping, ability training and knowledge transfer is a complete education, which is closer to the true meaning of education. However, whether it is a traditional educational concept or a more diverse educational goal, it is essentially the inheritance and expansion of basic educational concepts. With the help of advanced educational technology, multi-educational goals in teaching practice can be applied in much greater spaces .

#### IV. BASIC FRAMEWORK OF BLENDED MODE FOR COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING

The combination of face-to-face teaching and online teaching is an inevitable outcome of the reform of college English teaching in the information age. The research team deconstruct and reconstruct traditional classrooms through teaching practice, and divide blended teaching into three core components: online learning, in-class application and extracurricular practice. They are rich in context and The context of the application is interrelated, integrated, supportive, and reinforcing mutually (Wanner & Palmer, 2015). Blended teaching makes up for the shortcomings of traditional classroom teaching, and is conducive to giving full play to the main role of students in the learning process, thus promoting students' active learning, independent learning, and cooperative learning.

Based on the blended teaching theory and teaching practice, this study constructs a blended teaching mode of college English (See Figure 1).

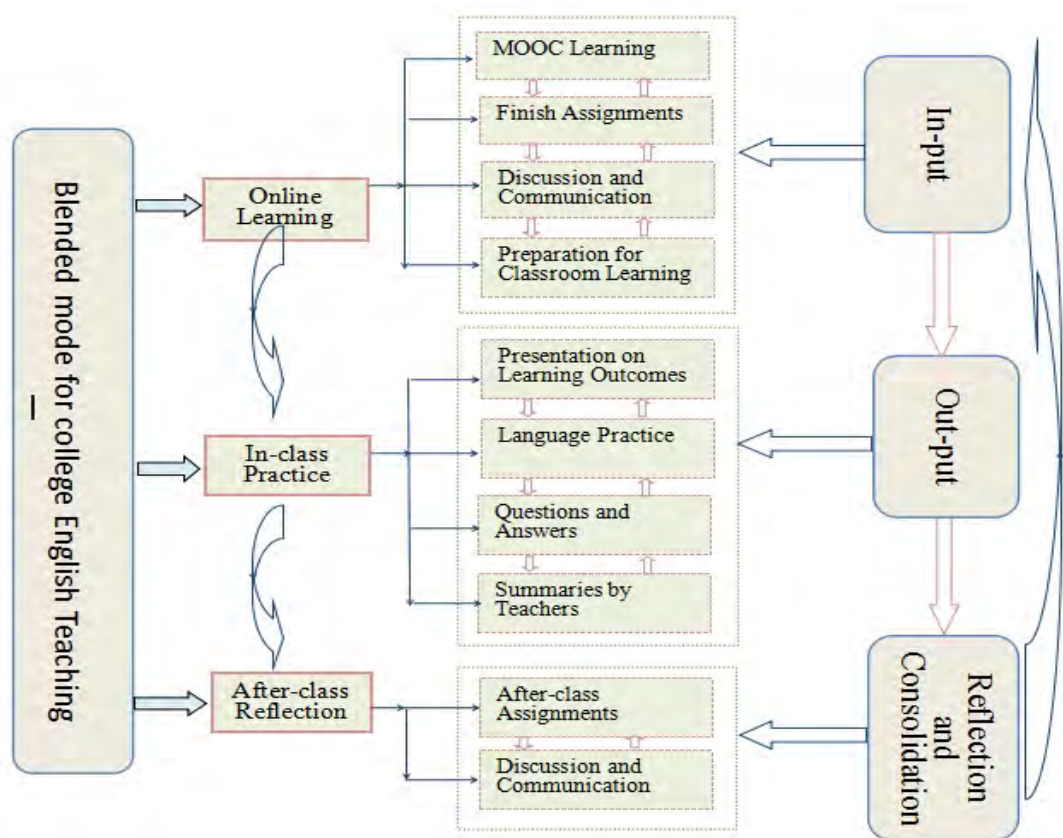


Figure 1: Blended Teaching Mode of College English

As the figure shows that the blended mode of college English teaching consists of three steps: on-line learning independently; in-class practice guided by teachers and after-class reflection for both what have been practiced and will be learned.

Step 1: Online learning. In the blended teaching mode of college English, the online learning form mainly adopts Small Private Online Course (SPOC), and the teaching resources include language knowledge learning and online learning community. Students learn language knowledge by watching the ingeniously designed micro-course video, and complete online exercises and tests that are closely related to the course content to consolidate what they have learned. The online learning community is a place for students to communicate asynchronously with other students and teachers. Through posting and replying, students can share language learning resources and experience with other students and teachers through discussion, communication, answering questions and collaboration.

Step 2: In-class application. In-class application refers to the application of language knowledge acquired in face-to-face classroom learning after students learn online autonomously. Classroom teaching in blended way is no longer based on knowledge transfer, but creates language application contexts based on given themes, enabling students to be exposed to the activities of presentation, games, problem discussion, program development and group report, etc. through various language-based, skill-based, or topic-based tasks. In the process of communicating and collaborating with the team members, everyone improves his/her English application ability unconsciously and continuously.

Step3: After-class reflection: After-class reflection also refers to extracurricular practice. It is an integral part of the blended teaching mode. After students have applied online language learning and in-class language applications, the most important thing is to apply the language knowledge they have learned to practice. Extracurricular practice is usually carried out based on the real language practice project conducted by a given theme, which is the extension and expansion of classroom learning. For example, students collaborate on projects such as questionnaires, video production, poster design, etc., and use English to conduct classroom presentations or online presentations to better their English proficiency and the ability to express in English.

## V. CONCLUSION

In the blended teaching mode of college English, students become active constructors of knowledge, gaining knowledge in practice through online learning, discussion and communication, and teamwork. The change of learning style poses great challenges to students' self-learning ability, cooperation and communication ability, and language practice ability. In order to achieve the expected teaching effect in the blended teaching mode, it is necessary to create a community of practice to provide students support to mutually exchange ideas, learn cooperatively and practice in a team. Blended learning mode for college English completely mobilize students' learning initiative and ensure students' effective participation in blended learning.

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