A Study on the Application of Synchronous& Asynchronous Blended Teaching Mode in Higher Vocational English Teaching

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Abstract

Under the background of Covid-19 epidemic, the whole country is forced to carry out online teaching by "stopping classes without stopping learning". In order to ensure the substantial equivalence between online and offline teaching, our English for Higher Education course adopted the synchronous& asynchronous blended teaching mode for a semester of practical teaching, and based on the analysis of teaching facts and effects, as well as students' feedback and supervisory experts' comments, it shows that the quality of online teaching can reach the effect of offline physical classroom teaching. The synchronous & asynchronous blended teaching model is essentially a teaching model that includes a mixture of offline physical classroom and online teaching. Therefore, under the background of epidemic normalization, the synchronous & asynchronous blended teaching mode will become the mainstream teaching mode of English teaching in higher education.

Keywords

Online Teaching; Synchronous & Asynchronous; Blened Teaching.

1. Introduction

The epidemic in early 2020 led the Ministry of Education to call for the full implementation of online teaching by "suspending classes without stopping school". [1] Since then, online teaching has become a top priority for the education sector. As the main implementer of teaching, front-line teachers, facing such a severe test, how to ensure that online teaching and offline teaching are substantially equivalent, which has become the primary consideration of teachers. In this paper, we take the online teaching practice of English for Higher Education in our college as an example and implement the synchronous & asynchronous blened teaching mode, in order to provide a new path to promote the innovation of the teaching mode of English for higher education and improve the teaching effect of English for higher education, and to ensure the substantial equivalence between online and offline teaching due to the special epidemic, rain and snow, traffic jams and other unexpected conditions.

2. Construction of Synchronous & Asynchronous Blened Teaching Mode

2.1. Basic Concepts

2.1.1.Online teaching is different from physical classroom teaching in that teachers and students carry out teaching activities under the condition of time and space separation through the Internet and relevant software tools. Online teaching includes synchronous teaching and asynchronous teaching. [2]

2.1.2.Blended learning is a form of teaching and learning that effectively integrates multiple learning contents, learning styles, technological tools and learning environments, with the ultimate goal of promoting students' learning engagement and improving their learning effectiveness. [3]

2.1.3.Online courses are available in two main online delivery modes, MOOC and SPOC.MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), which are open online courses for large scale learners, and SPOC (Small Private Online Course), which are small scale restricted online courses for small scale learners. SPOC (Small Private Online Course), a small-scale restricted online course, is an online course mainly for a small group of learners. [2] MOOC can be applied to the development of online asynchronous teaching, and SPOC can be used for both online asynchronous and online synchronous teaching.

2.1.4. A live online class is a model that uses a live platform and online course development to effectively combine tools such as live streaming, online learning and interactive platforms, i.e. an online platform that supports teachers and students of a certain size to access a live classroom through computers and mobile phones at any time for real-time teaching. [3] Live online classes allow for online synchronous teaching and learning.

2.1.5.Instant messaging groups are social platforms such as QQ or WeChat that are commonly used, and users create social groups as needed. Classes can create class QQ groups or class WeChat groups to achieve real-time communication between teachers and students, and teachers can send tasks and share document materials.

2.2.   Synchronous & Asynchronous Blened Teaching Mode

The synchronous & asynchronous blened teaching mode specifically adopts the combination of MOOC/SPOC + classroom teaching (offline classroom or live classroom) + instant messaging group (class QQ group or class WeChat group) to build a synchronous & asynchronous blened teaching mode through effective combination. The model is constructed according to the teaching objectives and teaching contents, making full use of the respective characteristics and advantages of MOOC, SPOC, live classroom, QQ group and WeChat group to reconstruct the teaching process. [5] By integrating the excellent online course resources of MOOC and combining with the cognitive level of students in our school, teachers make their own micro-lesson video resources and create a "school-based" SPOC platform using the Cloud Classroom or Learning Platform to carry out the blened teaching of SPOC-based flipped classroom. Students use the platform to study before class, receive tasks and upload assignments, as well as to perform synchronous activities such as sign-in, questionnaires, quizzes and tests. The online live class is mainly accessed through APP, webpage and client. Teachers use the online live platform to create their own live classroom and students follow the teacher's instructions to enter the live classroom at the specified time to listen and learn online. Since the epidemic, the distribution of the national "stopping classes without stopping learning" related documents, many companies have launched free live streaming platforms such as ZOOM, UMU, CC Talk, Rain Classroom, Blue Ink Cloud Class, Chaoxing Learning Platform, Nail Platform, Tencent Classroom, Enterprise WeChat, QQ, etc. [4] Each platform has been used to create a live classroom. [4] Each platform has its own advantages and user base, and frontline teachers can choose the platform they are comfortable with for live teaching according to their own preferences and proficiency in operation. The instant messaging groups are QQ groups or WeChat groups, which are most commonly used by teachers and students, to ensure barrier-free real-time communication and interaction between teachers and students, before, during and after classes. The synchronous & asynchronous blened teaching model is shown in the Figure 1.
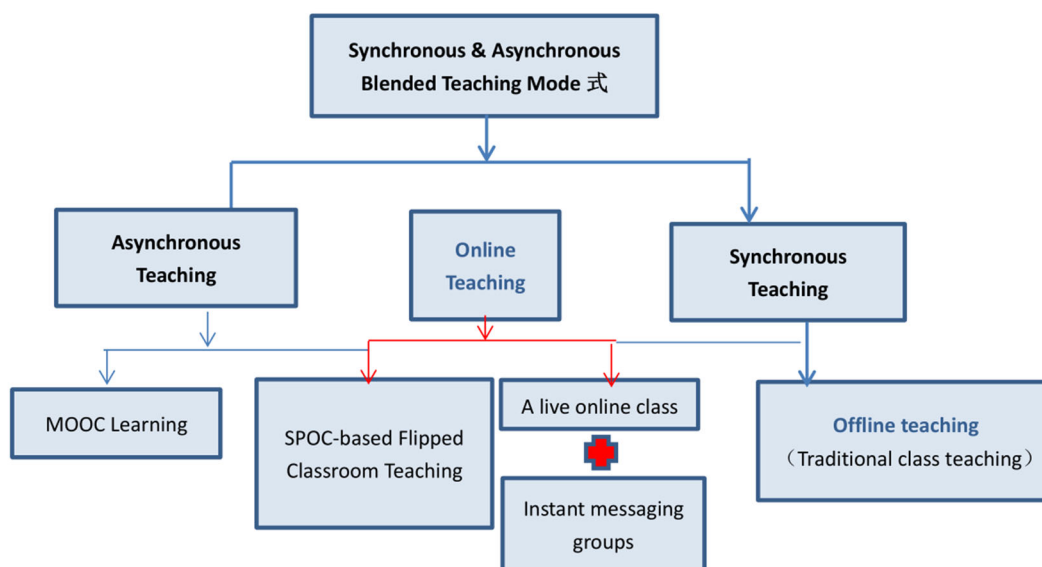
Figure 1. Synchronous & Asynchronous Blended Teaching Mode

3. The Specific Implementation of Synchronous & Asynchronous Blened Teaching Mode in Higher Vocational English Teaching

3.1. Asynchronous Teaching

3.1.1. Mooc Platform Learning

The Internet can provide students with the best teaching resources at home and abroad. Teachers need to search and choose the MOOC resources that are matches to the course they teach according to the actual needs of teaching. The MOOC resource that matches this course is found on the Chinese University MOOC . The teacher asks the students to download the Chinese University MOOC APP and register an account, and designates the national excellent course "Vocational Comprehensive English" for students to study independently, and requires the students to study and report the learning situation to the teacher regularly.

3.1.2. Creating the SPOC Platform

The learning platform used for this course is Chaoxing Learning Platform. Chaoxing Learning Platform is a learning software with one Platform and three ports, which is a smart and convenient learning platform that allows users to easily access a large amount of learning materials, and also has powerful classroom support functions. Through the platform, teachers can create their own courses and manage their courses and classes. Through the platform, they can publish tasks before class, interact with teachers and students during class and provide feedback after class, and carry out teaching work in all aspects of the flipped course. At the same time, in order to make learning more convenient for students and to provide abundant teaching resources, the course has also created a "mobile micro-course" web-based mobile platform and a WeChat public number platform. [5] Therefore, the SPOC platform of this course is Chaoxing Learning Platform as the main platform, and the "Mobile Micro Course" web mobile platform and WeChat public number as the support.

3.1.3. Teaching Implementation

The key to the implementation of online teaching is the creation of the course resource inventory. Teachers need to make their own micro-lesson video materials, electronic courseware, micro-video and other teaching materials according to the teaching content and the actual level of students, and build the course resource library through the SPOC platform, distribute the chapters and set the task points. Online learning tasks are released through the

platform or instant messaging groups before class. Students are free to choose their study time, complete the corresponding task and complete the relevant quizzes on the Learning Platform within the specified time. If students encounter any problems during the learning process, they can leave comments or ask questions through the discussion forum of the platform, or contact the teacher to answer questions in real time through the instant messaging group. Teachers can use the platform's big data to grasp students' learning status and know their mastery of relevant knowledge points in advance, so as to adjust and optimize the teaching content arrangement of the live class. [7] After the class, teachers can arrange assignments through the SPOC platform, as well as provide more revision materials and pre-reading materials, which help students consolidate what they have learned and expand their knowledge.

3.2. Synchronous Teaching

Synchronous teaching includes traditional offline classroom teaching and online live teaching. The main platform used for this course is CC Talk. The CC Talk live streaming platform is fully functional and the live streaming tools can achieve the functions required for live teaching, such as playing lecture notes, recording videos, screen sharing and supporting the playback of audio and video. The main thing is that it can realize the interactive video voice function for students, which is especially important for teaching English language which focuses on oral expression. Instant messaging from QQ groups or WeChat groups should also be utilized to solve unexpected problems such as dropped lines and lagging in the event of network failure or congestion.

3.2.1. Pre-class

The teacher should check the progress and completion of students' pre-class tasks through the SPOC platform and send reminders to students who have not yet completed them. The teacher should collect and collate questions from the quizzes and discussion boards to keep track of students' learning and knowledge.

3.2.2. While- lesson

Step1: To sign in online. The teacher initiates a 'sign-in' via the platform, which can be set up as a normal, gesture, location, QR code, etc. The sign-in time can also be set within a certain time frame.

Step 2: Introduction and pre-class task checking. The teacher displays the learning platform records , teachers and students find out how do students have completed the tasks and how they have scored. To check the students have really understood the content of the task and that they have completed it. The purpose of this step is to give students the opportunity to showcase themselves, to increase their confidence and to develop their oral English skills, and to develop their critical thinking skills through teacher and student comments. From the students' pre-class task presentation, the next step of teaching is introduced.

Step 3: Teaching. The teacher teaches the knowledge points. The teacher sorts out the key points and difficulties of the chapter, going into depth and helping students to master the relevant knowledge in the most effective teaching methods. Face to face class is the most direct way for teachers to control students' learning in real time. In offline physical classes, teachers and students can teach face-to-face and teachers can understand students' learning through their status and expressions. The live online classroom places higher demands on the teacher, who can communicate in real time through video and voice, as well as designing classroom activities and quizzes to keep track of students' learning in real time, in order to achieve the same quality and effectiveness of the live online and offline physical classroom.

Step 4: Group tasks. The most important aspect of teaching is that it is "student-centered", and direct student participation is the most effective way to learn. The purpose of this step is to check students' knowledge and grasp of sentence structure, group activities, liven up the

classroom atmosphere, allow students to learn by doing, develop team spirit through cooperative learning, and develop students' ability to objectively evaluate themselves and others in the evaluation session.

Step 5: Summarize. Mind maps can reflect knowledge clearly and unambiguously. Teachers can use different mind maps to present the learning content of each chapter so that students have a better grasp of the important and difficult points of classroom teaching.

3.2.3. After-class

Firstly, questionnaires. The teacher issues a questionnaire through the platform, with the content of the learning objectives and mastery of knowledge points, as well as teaching methods, so that the teacher can grasp the learning situation of students and the effect of the class, and provide immediate feedback on the quality of teaching.

Secondly, after-class assignments. The teacher assigns relevant homework through the platform so that students can consolidate their knowledge.

Thirdly, after-class quizzes. The teacher issues quizzes through the platform and students complete them online. The data from the quizzes is used to analyze the students' mastery of knowledge and to focus on the knowledge points with a large number of errors in the next lesson.

Fourthly, Expansion. After class, the teacher uploads more relevant supplementary materials for each chapter on the platform to expand students' knowledge.

3.3. Analysis of Teaching Effectiveness

The whole teaching process of the synchronous & asynchronous teaching mode has formed a "student-centred" teaching method, which fully mobilizes students' learning enthusiasm and initiative, stimulates students' interest in learning English, the classroom atmosphere is active, teachers and students interact more frequently, and the teaching effect is obvious. The results of the questionnaire survey showed that 95% of the students were satisfied with the synchronous & asynchronous teaching mode; 92% of the students said that they had achieved the expected learning objectives; 90% of the students thought that the teaching content was practical; 88% of the students liked the group task activities; and 92% of the students were satisfied with their learning performance.

4. Conclusion

This study is a new teaching model - -Synchronous & Asynchronous Blened Teaching Model - proposed during the 2020 epidemic to ensure that online teaching and offline classroom teaching are of equal quality and effectiveness. The teaching model has been practically applied to the teaching of English for Higher Education. Based on the feedback from students and the evaluation by the College's supervisory experts, the course was awarded as an "Excellent Online Course". The synchronous & asynchronous teaching mode ensured the quality of the English for Higher Education during the epidemic. After the epidemic, the synchronous & asynchronous blended teaching mode was also applied to the offline physical classroom mixed with online teaching. For the context of the normalisation of the epidemic, the application of the synchronous & asynchronous blended teaching mode in the teaching of English in higher education will play its role in ensuring teaching quality and improving teaching effectiveness. Although the synchronous & asynchronous blended teaching mode has a considerable application effectiveness in the process of teaching English in higher education, there are still some problems that need to be solved and improved, such as the selection of teaching resources, the design of teaching and learning, and the exploration of teaching strategies. Therefore, the research on the application of synchronous & asynchronous blended teaching mode in higher

vocational English teaching needs more participation from researchers and practitioners, and needs to be tested and improved in practice.

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