

HOW TO TEACH ENGLISH LESSONS DURING PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF COVID19: A CASE STUDY OF A HIGHER VOCATIONAL COLLEGE IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT: *During prevention and control of COVID-19 in China, different modes of online education are conducted in all kinds of schools, from primary to universities. This paper illustrates how College English course is taught in Shandong College of Electric Technology in China. With reference of MOOC and SPOC theories, lessons are carefully redesigned and provided on Chaoxing Platform, one of the 37 leading online education platforms in China. Taking advantage of MOOC, SPOC and micro-course online videos, all lessons are deliberately redesigned and provided either on live or in recordings. Survey shows over 80% students are gratified with the online course and effectiveness of the online course is equal to classroom teaching.*

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, SPOC, English, effective, case study

INTRODUCTION

After prevention and control of COVID-19 in China in January 2020, postponing of start of 2020 spring semester was announced by Ministry of Education of China, following which a series of documents proposing “no suspension of classes” were released. Classes are held in all kinds of forms on various platforms. An online learning platform offering a variety of courses based on commonly used textbooks in China is opened by MOE for free for students from grade one to twelve. For students from rural and remote areas with unreliable or no internet connection, relevant courses and learning resources are broadcast over China Education Network Television, as required by MOE. Multiple free platforms are also opened for high education institutes as well. On MOOC2U.com, free online courses in addition to over 3,000 digital textbooks are provided to college students as well as anyone who’d like a college certificate, and all materials are easily accessible with a mobile phone. According to the data released by MOE, as of April 3, a total of 1,454 high education institutes across the country have provided online education to students; more than 950,000 teachers have created 942,000 online courses and taught 7.133 million lessons via over a hundred online platforms.

According to Ding Shulin, there are two major types of online course considering where the course is taken, completely online course and blended course. Online course could also be classified into three types considering how learning materials are provided, resource supplying, resource creating, and resource creating+supplying. The most widespread solution in China during prevention and control of COVID-19 is live course+resource supplying. Live courses are mostly provided on online meeting platforms, teaching platforms, paid knowledge platforms, traditional online school systems, and MOOC/SPC platforms.

Visual;

In Shandong College of Electric Technology, teachers are advised to either suggest MOOC courses or provide SPOC courses to all students during prevention and control of COVID-19. In order to take advantage of visual strengths of live course and abundant resources online, especially on national quality teaching resource platforms, staff of English course finally decided on a complex mode including live course, micro-course videos, and resource sharing.

Research Question

How can English course for vocational college students be taught totally online during prevention and control of COVID-19?

Research Objectives

1. To recommend possible lesson plan of online English course for first graders of vocational college
2. To summarize pros and cons of English SPOC for vocational college students

LITERATURE REVIEW

MOOC and English course

Ever since MOOC was invented in 2012, great changes have been witnessed in education, English teaching included. Research on English teaching in China has come to a new phase as well. Search result on China National Knowledge Internet shows that the earliest paper on English MOOC in China was published in 2013, followed by a considerable increase in next year. The year 2015 witnesses greatest increase in number of papers published. Yet, in 2018, both the total number of research published and the amount of literature being cited see noticeable decrease.

In terms of research content, the total 76 papers (until May17, 2020) published in core journals in China could be classified into five different fields, namely, application,

teaching mode, educational reform, related technology and review. According to the knowledge graph, the top four frequently used keywords are student, blended teaching, platform and courses.

In general, despite the great number of papers, there are scarcely influential researcher and researches. In most applied researches, the number of research sample is comparatively small. In addition, most researches focus on high education instead of primary school and middle school education. Last but not least, the number of research on quality evaluation is rather small.

SPOC

In 2013, Professor Fox Amando in University California, Berkeley introduced SPOC (small and private online course) to improve college students' participation and interaction. Shortly after that, first applied research was published in China in 2014. Comparatively speaking, the research of English SPOC is not as heated as that of English MOOC, which could be seen from the number of papers published in Chinese core journals. From 2014 to 2020, the total number of papers on English SPOC in Chinese core journals is merely 24 (until May 17, 2020), not even half of number of English MOOC.

Same as research on English MOOC, the researches on English SPOC in China mainly focus on high education. Knowledge graph indicates top 4 frequently used keywords are teaching, teaching method, student, and resources.

LESSON PLAN

In Shandong College of Electric Technology, teachers are advised to introduce MOOC courses or offer original SPOC courses to students. English teaching faculty decided on SPOC course on Chaoxing Platform, one of the leading 37 online teaching platforms in China.

General educational objectives

Get knowledge related to COVID-19, especially knowledge regarding how to protect yourself and your family; learn some common knowledge about brand names; be able to design an English brand name; be able to apply for a booth at a trade fair in English; be able to introduce your products at a trade fair in English; be able to communicate with your clients in English and get information related to your business at a trade fair.

Specific learning objectives:

Knowledge: master words and phrases used for product description; know how to build a brand, how to register for a trade fair, how to get information about your clients, get some common knowledge regarding order, pay, transport in international business.

Competence: be able to write product introduction in English; be able to apply for a booth in a trade fair and introduce your products to your clients in English; be able to negotiate with your potential clients about price, order, pay and way of delivery, etc.

Quality: be careful enough not to miss important information in communication with your potential clients; be well-behaved at a trade fair and present professional image to your clients; be careful enough not to make any mistakes in details of product item, number, pay, and transport ; be patient with clients' requirements and complaints.

1. Learning methods

Watch online videos or live course provided by teachers; teach yourself important knowledge provided by teachers online; participate discussion online; finish tasks and homework.

2. Online resources

type of resource	content of resource	source of resource
pdf file, picture, audio, ppt file	textbook and recordings, vocabulary and grammar	textbook publisher
video	introduction to learning materials, explanation of vocabulary, grammar, passage and exercises	collected from internet; recorded by teachers

3. Learning schedule

chapter	week	learning objectives	learning materials (textbook: Get Ready for Career, higher level 2, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2015.)	Learning methods
Unit 1 Brand Name	1	Recognize some famous brands in English; Know how to use passive voice in product introduction	Lead-in brochure: brand names and its products; Grammar brochure: passive voice	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos
	1	Know how to introduce a product Know how to communicate face-to-face with clients properly	Word list (words of product introduction); Sample dialogues: 1)introduce a digital camera to a client; 2)introduce some Chinese handicrafts to a client; 3)introduce some silk products to a client	Watch micro-course videos; Record your own dialogues
	2	Know how to build a brand name	Reading material: <i>How Do You Build a Brand Name?</i>	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos
	2	Know how to write a product description	Exercise: 1) Read a product description and fill out the form 2) Write a product description of your cell phone	Watch micro-course videos Finish online exercise
Unit 2 Trade Fair	3	Know how to describe different types of booths at a trade fair Know how to use attributive clause	Lead-in brochure: different types of booths at a trade fair Grammar brochure: attributive clause	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos

	3	Know how to book a booth at a trade fair; Know how to introduce a product to potential clients at a trade fair	Sample dialogues: 1)book a booth over a phone call; 2)introduce your silk products to clients	Watch videos; Record your own dialogues
	4	Know the etiquette of attending a trade fair and communicating face-to-face with clients	Reading materials : 3 <i>Secrets to Trade Show Success</i>	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos
	4	Know how to fill out a registration form	Excises: 1) Read a company introduction and fill out a registration form for the company with given information; 2) Fill out a registration form for your own virtual company for a trade fair	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos; Finish online exercise
Unit 3 Getting Information	5	Know different medias of getting information; Know subject-verb agreement rules	Lead-in brochure: different medias of getting information Grammar brochure: subject-verb agreement	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos;
	5	Know how to make phone calls to get the information you need; Know how to introduce your company and products to your clients	Sample dialogues: 1) Meet a new potential client for the first time; 2) Book a hotel room over a phone call; 3) Receive a phone call for your colleague or boss when he/she is out;	Watch videos; Record your own dialogues
	6	Know the tips of communicating with your clients	Reading material: <i>Tips for Getting the Information You Need</i>	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos

	6	Know how to write a simple enquiry and reply	Exercises: 1) Write an enquiry 2) Write a reply to an enquiry	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos
Unit 4 Order and Payment	7	Know expressions of commonly seen currencies in different countries; Know how to use infinitive phrases	Lead-in brochure: Commonly seen currencies in different countries; Grammar brochure: Infinitive phrase	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos
	7	Know how to place an order and confirm an order over phone calls; Know how to negotiate terms of payment and delivery time with your client/seller	Sample dialogues: Place an order over a phone call; Negotiate terms of payment; Negotiate delivery details	Watch videos; Record your own dialogues
	8	Know common ways of payment in international business and their pros and cons	Reading material: Payment in International Trade	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos
	8	Know how to write an order letter and its reply	Exercises: Write an order letter; Write a reply to an order	Attend live course/Watch recorded course videos
Unit 5 Transport	9	Know most common transports; Know when and how to use inverted sentences	Lead-in brochure: Commonly seen transports; Grammar brochure: inverted sentence	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos

	9	Know how to negotiate details of transport with your client/ seller; Know how to inquire about transport over a phone call; Know how to introduce terms of transport to your client	Sample dialogues: Inquire about a delivery; Negotiate about different ways of shipment; Inquire about a delay in delivery	Watch videos; Record your own dialogues
	10	Know pros and cons of different transports in international trade	Reading material : Choose the Right Mode of Transport for Your Goods	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos
	10	Know how to send a fax	Exercise: write a fax	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos
Unit 6 Dealing with Complaint	11	Know situations to make a complaint; Know how to use emphatic sentences	Lead-in brochure: Situations you need to make a complaint; Grammar brochure: emphatic sentence	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos
	11	Know how to make a complaint over phone calls; Know how to describe problems of the products; Know how to receive a compliant call	Sample dialogues: Ask for a replacement for the goods; Complain about late delivery; Communicate over a delayed payment;	Watch videos; Record your own dialogues
	12	Know the tips of dealing with customer complaints	Reading material: <i>Top 10 Ways to Deal with Customer Complaints</i>	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos

	12	Know how to write a letter of complaint	Exercises: Write a letter of complaint; Write a reply to letter of complaint	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos
Unit 7 New Personnel	13	Know the reasons for changing a job Know how to use subjunctive mood	Lead-in brochure: Situations people change their jobs; Grammar brochure: subjunctive mood	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos
	13	Know how to enquire about a position over a phone call or in person; Know how to attend a job interview	Sample dialogues: Inquire about a position; Take a job interview	Watch videos; Record your mock interview
	14	Know the tips of writing a cover letter	Reading material: <i>6 Secrets to Writing a Great Cover Letter</i>	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos
	14	Know how to write a proper cover letter	Exercises: Write a cover letter	Attend live course/ Watch recorded course videos

SURVEY AND EVALUATION

Students' evaluation

After fourteen weeks of online course, a survey on quality of online course was made. Questionnaire was sent to over 1000 first graders in Shandong College of Electric Technology online. Survey shows 93.55% students find the online course satisfactory, and 6.45% comparatively satisfactory. Nearly half satisfied students (48%) mention in interview that the repeatable videos are very helpful.

Teachers' evaluation of online course

Even two third of teachers (11 out of 19) agree to total online course, teachers' evaluation differs and shows certain proportion to their ages. Understandably, teachers above 50 feel more reluctant to provide online course while younger teachers prefer online course to off line course. Those teachers who prefer total off line course admit that new technology required for online course could be a big barrier and some show concern about low efficiency of non face-to-face communication.

Pros and cons of online course

Interview shows that for teachers, one of the greatest advantages of having lessons online is that they don't have to commute. Working from home means teachers could take care of their families as well, which seems especially important considering the fact that their children should also study home. For young teachers, the work efficiency of working online is twice of working off line. The trick lies in the fact that once the video and teaching materials are prepared, everything could be shared in different classes. The assessment of students also seems much easier, since with AI homework assistants, teachers have been removed off the the burden of assessing students homework.

Necessity of learning new technology is the biggest disadvantage of online course for teachers. Every teacher has spent over ten hours learning new software before providing online course. Two teachers described the training as "useful yet time-consuming". Survey shows that lack of face-to-face communication is considered the second biggest disadvantage. As for the reasons of concern, the eldest teacher asserted that "unreal" feelings of learning online may result in poorer performance, while some young teachers show concern over students ability to finish the tasks without teachers' supervision. When technique is mentioned, teachers point out that there could be many ways of cheating in online course.

Survey of students to some extent agree to the young teachers' concern. The polarized test result . Indicates polarized reactions of students to the online course, coinciding with the top factor affecting quality of online study which can be seen from the questionnaire, self-discipline. Survey also shows students with better self-discipline have better acceptance of online course while students admitting difficulty with self-discipline are less satisfied with online course.

In the interview, some students attribute better acceptance and more satisfaction of online course to the repeatable learning materials, especially recordings, videos and tests. It is also a merit that all files could be downloaded from the online course platform. Generally speaking, compared with traditional off line course, students have more choices regarding when and how much they learn and practice. For the disadvantages of online course, lack of interaction, distraction, reliance on network conditions rank top three in students' survey.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Online course, as a new means of learning, has played a vital role in higher vocational education during prevention and control of COVID-19 in China with both merits and shortcomings. One of major finding of the current study is that effect of online course is related to self-discipline of students, in others words, motivation.

Measures could be taken to improve online course, especially for students who claim to have trouble with self-discipline. The marking system on online course platforms could be designed with more fun, while teachers could take use of students' favored teaching materials, like videos and cartoons. For students, they could be encouraged to work with fellows to get more support and dual control.

As Anthony G. Picciano has reviewed, interaction is important for success of a course, online course included. Consequently, to make students feel like learning with a group, teachers should create the atmosphere of a virtual classroom, like use usual greetings, check the attendance, finish with a summary. In live course, teachers could design some interactive sessions, the easiest way of which would be to have students get connected with teacher over microphones and cameras.

For students living in areas with not satisfaction network, they could be encouraged to watch recorded videos instead of attending live course. Over two thousand years ago, Confucius emphasized the importance of "to teach students in accordance with their aptitude". Likewise, in the age of internet, we should also teach students in accordance with their environment, in particular, their network conditions.

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Appendix:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear students,

The following questionnaire is to investigate to what extent you are satisfied with the online course during prevention and control of COVID-19. The aim is to improve our teaching performance. Please be informed that your answers will be completely anonymous and used for scientific research only.

Thank you for filling in this questionnaire.

Please choose the most appropriate choice.

1. You are
 - male student
 - female student
2. Are you satisfied with the online English course during prevention and control of COVID-19?
 - Very satisfied
 - Satisfied
 - Just OK
 - Not very much satisfied
 - Very unsatisfied
3. What do you think of the English homework during prevention and control of COVID-19?
 - Very rational
 - Rational
 - Just OK
 - Irrational
 - Very irrational
4. What do you think of interaction in online English class?
 - Very good
 - Good
 - Just OK
 - Bad
 - Very bad

5. Does your teach answer you questions in time?
Very timely
Timely
Just OK
Not timely
Very late
6. Does your teacher feed back your homework assessment in time?
Very timely
Timely
Just OK
Not timely
Very late
7. How much of what has been taught online have you grasped?
100%
90%
80%
70%
60%
< 60%
8. What are the major factors affecting your online study?(You may choose more than one)
Poor self-discipline
Poor network condition
Teachers' poor performance
Lack of learning materials
Others
9. Do you think what has been taught online should be taught again after school opens?
Yes
No
10. What are your suggestions for English course after school opens?

QUESTIONNAIRE

(in simplified Chinese)

1. 你的性别是?
男
女

2. 你对疫情防控期间的英语课程在线教学是否满意?

非常满意

满意

一般

不满意

非常不满意

3. 你认为疫情防控期间的英语课程作业情况

非常合理

合理

一般

不合理

非常不合理

4. 你认为在线英语课程的互动如何?

非常好

好

一般

差

非常差

5. 老师是否能够及时答疑解惑?

非常及时

及时

一般

不及时

非常不及时

6. 老师反馈作业是否及时?

非常及时

及时

一般

不及时

非常不及时

7. 英语课程线上讲授部分你掌握了多少?

100%

90%

80%

70%

60%

< 60%

8. 影响你线上学习的主要因素有哪些?

自制力差

网络差

教师讲授差

缺少学习资料

其他

9. 你认为学校复学后，线上已经讲授内容是否需要重新讲授一遍？

是

否

10. 你对学校复学后的英语课程还有什么建议？