The Application of Blended Teaching Mode to Higher Vocational English Teaching

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ABSTRACT. *Vocational English is a common compulsory course, which plays a key role in cultivating the comprehensive quality of students from higher vocational education and improving their sustainable development of career. According to the Education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan, an open resource sharing of MOOC should be built to improve the service of MOOC，which brings new life and vigor into higher vocational English education. In this paper, the situation and problem of vocational English teaching is explored and the new online education platform: The Smart Tree and smart classrooms on campus are used as teaching tools. It is also discussed that how to establish a Blended teaching mode catering to the learning needs of students from higher vocational education--- that is the English MOOC. And at the same time, the English MOOC is adjusted based on the learning feedback of the students so as to enhance the Blended teaching mode of higher vocational English education.*

KEYWORDS: *English MOOC; Blended Teaching Mode; Teaching Mode; Smart Classrooms*

1. Introduction

According to Basic Requirements of English Teaching in higher vocational Education, higher vocational English courses are public compulsory basic courses in the program of talents training program, which aim at cultivating the comprehensive quality of higher vocational students and improving their vocational capacity of sustainable development. The teaching aims of higher vocational English courses are set to cultivate vocational students' communicative competence in English in specific career context, that is the listening and speaking abilities. And students' cross-cultural communication competence and their cultural quality of English will

also get enhanced. After learning such higher vocational English courses, studednts could complete English second language acquisition, grasp efficient English learning rules and learning strategies, strengthen their vocational competitiveness and develop their lifelong learning of English learning.

With the development of Internet, MOOCS have come into being as a barnd new network platform since the yaer of 2012 and it is in the ascendant in recent years. [1] MOOCS bring vigor and vitality to traditional classroom teaching and speed up the op-down reforms of teaching rules, teaching strategies and teaching modes. It is regulated in the education Informatization 2.0 Action Plan of the Ministry of Education in 2018 that all the general objectives will be achieved that taechers will have an access to information technology of teaching, all students will avail themselves of information technology of learning and digital campuses will be built all over the country. As an online Internet education, MOOCs have established stable and mature platform systems, such as MOOC China, MOOC Web, Aikecheng, the Smart Tree and so on and a lots of mobile phone apps. As the MOOC platforms developed and promoted, teachers take advantage of progressive Internet technology and excellent network education resources to make English MOOC platforms, which meet the learning needs of students. Through online and offline learning, students' interest in English learning and their learning efficiency will get will get boosted to a high degree and strengthen the communication between teachers and students in and after English classes. [2]

In this paper, it will discuss the current conditions of the first-line teaching and inherent problems among them. After that, the reform of Blended Teaching Mode applied to higher vocational English classes will be expored and therefore, based on such a theory, a "MOOC and Smart Courses" platform will be put up as the second step. And then, experimental data collected from in-classroom practices, MOOC platform and students' feedback will be analysed. At the final stage, the data will used as a guidance to improve and perfect the "MOOC and Smart Courses" platform.

2. The Blended Teaching Mode

2.1 The Definition of Blended Teaching

At the end of 20th century, educators from many foreign countries have conducted therotical researches and experiments on network teaching for as long as 10 years. As a result, they found that the effects of network teaching is not as good as those of traditional teaching. Therefore, educators decided on mature reflections on network teaching. With the further develpoment of network information education and based on the integration of constructivist learning theory and Bloom's mastery learning theory, Graham &Trick put forward the similar definition to the Blended Teaching as early as in 1997: Blended Teaching is the teaching mode of integration of traditional classroom teaching and network techniques. [3] In 2002, Mason & Rennie further expanded the scope of the definition on this early definition: Blended Teaching is the combination of teaching methods, teaching technologies

and teaching situations and so on. In view of definition, the scope of Blended Teaching is further expanded. Driscoll made a comprehensive conclusion of the definition of Blended Teaching in his professional work: in Blended Teaching, it has combined mand kinds of network application technologies to obtain its teaching goals; the best learning outcomes could only be experienced only through the combination of teaching methods and network application technologies; network application technologies have to be used together with classroom teaching; an optimal effectes could be reached only by the integraion of network application technologies and task-based teaching method. [4]

2.2 The Research of Blended Teaching

In 2004, educationists Rovai and Jordan designed different teaching modes and made research on the sense of collaboration among classmates. According to the research, students' sense of collaboration reached the highest point under the blended teaching mode, which almostly equaled to that under traditional mode of classroom teaching. And it was significantly higher than the sense of collaboration in network teaching. As a result, it is concluded that the blended teaching mode is benificial to cultivating students' sense of collaboration in learning.[5]

In the year of 2015, Sezen Tosun conducted experiments on the vocabulary learning of the second language learners under the blended teaching mode. The study found that the effect of vocabulary learning of studets under the blended teaching mode was not strikingly better than that of the traditional teaching mode. But according to the questionnaire investigation in the process of the experiments, students were more inclined to blended teaching mode. Based on the results of the experiments, blended teaching mode may not be suitable to all kinds of teaching content. But as a teaching method, it is more popular among students. So we can take the first step in some classes to carry out pilot work, and then, put it into wide use.

In 2015, Su Xiaohong integrated MOOC with traditional classroom teaching and bulit an online and offline teaching platform, which was a complementary model of in-class and after-class. In Xu Meidan's thesis, she made a CAD class reform based on blended teaching by the platform: Wechat software. And finally, it became a very successful teaching reform in 2016. [6] In 2016, He Xiaoqing made his physics course under the blended teaching mode on the platform Moodle, which is based on Social Constructivism. Physicial experiments were displayed on the Internet platform, making combination of online teaching and classroom teaching. It will help cultivate students' autonomous learning ability and through online videos of physicial experiments, students are prone to develop their ability of summary.[7] In 2016, Zhu Lirong designed her blended teaching mode based on social softwares, including QQ, Wechat, Baidu Online Disk, email, Douban discussion group and so on. As students were familiar with these social softwares, it was quite easy to promote this reform of teaching mode and be highly praised among students.

3.   Current Situation of Higher Vocational English Education

In this paper, it will discuss the current situation of the cultivation of students' abilities from three aspects, namely: independent learning ability, English comprehensive practical ability and international communication ability.

In terms of independent learning ability, stratified teaching methods have not been applied to higher vocational English education. The traditional method for lecture or the method for lecture based on multimedia is still used in classroom teaching. Teachers read their coursewares in the class and there are lack of interaction and communication between teachers and students. Students' enthusiasm for learning is not quite high. And there are huge gaps between students' English foundation, so the same teaching methods applied to all the students may not be suitable at all the times. According to Yan Jinbo (2013) and Zhao Jizheng's (2008) experiments, vocational students report strong sense of helplessness of acquired character on English learning and they present low level of independent learning ability on English classes. Althoug students are aware that they should learn English seriously, they do not make good performance in general. At the end of the experiments, Yan Jinbo and Zhao Jizheng ascribe it to students' lack of self-guided planning ability and improper learning methods, which leads to a low learning efficiency and learning interest. As a result, it is common that studebts' sense of helplessness of acquired character grows higher and higher. [1]

In most vocational colleges, English teaching still remains its traditonal mode: that is the English grammar teaching. From the perspective of the settinig of English courses in higher vocational colleges, most colleges have offered college English courses, in which insufficient class hours are common phenomennon. But there is a small portion of colleses making courses on Britain and the United States, English-speaking countries'cultures, practical English courses and intercultural communication courses on English, which aim at cultivating students' intercultural communicative competence. Only do a few colleges make, they are elective courses for students. Student capacity of these elective courses cannot meet the overall needs of the colleges. The coveerage of the courses are not enough for vocational studets, resulting in the purpose of improving students' intercultural communicative competence has not been realized. On the other hand, from the perspective of class teaching, teaching aims still remain cultivating students' skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation and so on. At the same time, influenced by class hours, teaching content, teaching methods and teaching devices, English teachers are limited to a great degree in the aspect of spreading intercultural communication knowledge, which lead to a situation that students could only express themselves by English on the premise of thinking in the backgroud of mother tongue, ignoring many aspects that notice with the point during intercultural communication.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education carried out the document Requirements of English Teaching in Higher Vocational Education, in which clearly put forward requirements on cultivating practical English application ability of Vocational College Students, especially the ability of dealing with future career related business in English. Under such requirements, students' practical English application ability

will be appropriate to the major that students learn very much, students will show a much stronger comprehensive competitiveness in job application and the working ability of students will also be improved in the future. But in higher vocational English teaching, the situation is just the opposite. Though multimedia teaching and various modern teaching methods are applied to practical English teaching, it grows more and more difficult to cultivate students's listening and speaking ability due to their poor English foundation, low quality of oral expression ability and inactive classroom participation and so on. English teachers design different English activities and guide students to take part in, but only some students with good English proficiency will participate in classroom activities while students with poor English proficiency have to accept passively with unsatisfactory classroom performance. Besides, their learning habits, interest in English and learning abilities are also different. From the perspective of the opening of English courses in Higher cocational colleges, as a public compulsory course, the class hours of College English have been cut down as a universal phenomenon, which makes it impossible to allocate enough class hours to develop students' listening and speaking skills, not to mention the basic skill of students' English pronunciation. And there are few many specialized English courses, that is ESP, related to students' professional ability. Even though there are some such courses in some colleges, more emphasis is placed on the mastery of specialized English vocabulary in classroom teaching instead of training students' English comprehensive practical ability in specialized English class.

To sum up, it is not difficult to find that the current situation of ability training in higher vocational English teaching is worrying, which there is still a long way to go before the goal of "ability training" in English teaching in higher vocational colleges be achieved. Therefore, looking for effective teaching strategies, changing the teaching situation and improving the teaching effect have become the top priority of the current teaching reform.

4. Application of The Blended Teaching Mode to Higher Vocational English Education

In 2012, Ministry of Education released a document Educational Information Ten-year Development Planning (2011-2020), in which encouraged to promote the integration of information technology and teaching and build intelligent teaching environment. It has opened the curtain of the construction of intelligent teaching environment in colleges and universities. As a brand new way of intelligent teaching means in the information age, MOOC makes a full use of technical information means, such as big data, Internet of things, mobile Internet and cloud computing and so on, which are short for "Dazhiyiyun". By such modern means, it has made the dreams of scientific design of classroom teaching, information management, instant feedback and multi-level interaction between teachers and students come true and built the teaching mode of information classroom in the era of big data. In this paper, the experiment is based on the College English (1) MOOC designed by English teachers' team in

Shandong Vocational College of Industry. The English classroom teaching in 9 teaching weeks are carried out in combination of two teaching means: MOOC platform and smart classroom. Offline English courses are given in phonetic smart classroom of the college. The offline classroom is divided into 5 groups with 8 students in one group. Each group is equipped with a display screen which could see teachers' large screen shared to the whole class. The screen in student' team can provide writing, touching and many other\functions. At the same time, the classroom screen can be switched to the student group screen at any time, and thewhole class can share the results of each group's discussion. The teaching content shared by teachers on the white board could be shard through Baibanjia app, by which students could get the picture of the white board under the permission from the teachers' side. The English teacher team build a MOOC platform on the Zhihuishu website, whose design methods are shown in Fig 1. The teachers made micro-lectures based on English textbooks, along with 3 parts of micro-lectures on phonetic symbols, intercultural communication and curriculum ideology and politics, making up for the lack of class hours. English teachers could master students' learning situation on network backstage by setting unit tests, unit discussion, questions in the micro-lectures and final exams. Thus, teachers could adjust their teaching content and teaching methods to reach a satisfactory teaching results in offline classroom.
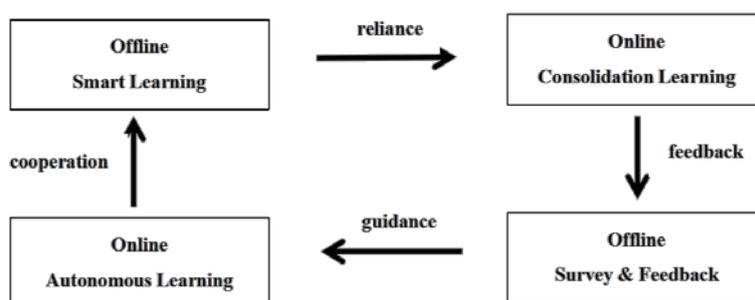

Fig. 1 The Design of Higher Vocational English Teaching Based on Mooc

5. Conclusion

Guided by the aims of improving students' comprehensive practical ability, the design has combined excellent online teaching platform and offline smart classroom teaching, forming complementary advantages in English teaching. It has also made a blended teaching mode of MOOC + Smart Classroom in College English and improved classroom teaching mechanism and process assessment scheme. During this experiment, such teaching achievements are realised: Students complete the learning of wisdom tree platform autonomously, make reasonable arrangement of

online and offline learning time, and complete thelearning tasks successfully; teachers fully realize the role of the guide in the classroom, communication between teachers and students has been strengthened and teachers adjust teaching methods according to the big data feedback of students learning situation on the platform, which has been riding a wave of positive buzz among students. This novel blended teaching modecould fully mobilize the enthusiasm of students in class, stimulated students' interest in learning and improved teaching quality.

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