

## **SPOC-based Flipped Classroom of College English: Construction of an Effective Learning Model**

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**Abstract**—Effective college English learning has long been overwhelmed by the focus on effective teaching in the traditional classroom teaching model. This paper first discusses the essential elements in effective English learning environment, deconstructs and reconstructs college English classroom by integrating Small Private Course (abbreviated as SPOC hereafter), mobile learning and social communication into classroom teaching and learning. It is concluded that the SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English can serve as an effective learning model in teaching and learning practice which has promoted English learning by providing rich resources, environment, flexible time and space.

**Keywords**—SPOC, flipped classroom, college English, effective learning

### **1 Introduction**

In recent years, college English teaching reform in China has achieved remarkable progress in the studies on what and how to teach.[1][2][3][4] However, it is undeniable that teaching, no matter how important, cannot take the place of learning. The fact that Chinese college students are not competent in English application as a whole proves that the present English teaching has yet to impel effective learning in most of students. Therefore, much more attention should be paid on the issue of what and how to learn to achieve the effective learning of students, thus furthering the present college English teaching reform in China to a new level.

In mainland of China, English is not the official language or even the second language. Therefore, English learners lack the environment for English application and classroom teaching, as the main place where students learn English, becomes critically important. However, the current college English teaching is faced with three problems in promoting English learning. Firstly, due to the large scale of college English classes, the traditional classroom teaching cannot support the individualized learning; secondly, the exam-oriented teaching imposes a negative influence on English learning; thirdly, the traditional college English teaching, as teacher-centered and instruction-dominated, cannot integrate the classroom teaching and after-class learning.[5]

This paper, by integrating online courses with flipped class, and applying information technologies to the management of intellectualized, individualized and diversified mobile learning, aims to establish a SPOC-based flipped classroom of college

English, in order to solve the above-mentioned three problems and exert the role of English classroom teaching on its promotion of effective learning to full extent.

## **2 Elements in effective English learning environment**

Concerning effective learning, it is of vital importance to construct the environment for effective English learning. The process of language learning is the one when learners react with others (the teacher, peers and native speakers), language and society. Therefore, one of the ways to promote effective English learning by applying information technologies is to construct the environment for effective English learning, the elements in which, as proposed by Wang Na[6] and based on our practices in college English teaching, can be summarized as follows:

### **2.1 Contextual**

Language use can never be isolated from its context. For Chinese English learners, few chances are available after class to get involved in contexts of language use, which will definitely exert a negative influence on their learning motives. Therefore, a favorable context of English learning is the prerequisite for effective learning.

### **2.2 Constructive**

Effective learning includes the construction of meaning, language knowledge and language competence. Only after the countless processes of meaning construction, can language knowledge and competence be constructed step by step.

### **2.3 Collaborative**

Effective English learning requires the collaboration between learner and others, during which, their English knowledge system is perfected and their ability of English application is developed.

### **2.4 Applicable**

One of the vital procedures in effective learning is learn to use, only in this way, can opportunities be created for English learners to improve their sense of self efficacy, and their confidence, motive and interest in English application be constantly enhanced.

### **2.5 Interactive**

Effective English learning is very often triggered by the frequent, meaningful activities of linguistic interaction. During the process of linguistic interaction, emotions of communicators can be expressed and messages can be conveyed.

## **2.6 Social**

The social factor of language determines that effective English learning is dependent on the establishment, maintenance and development of linguistic communities, which refer to the products of online and off-line ecological learning and the space where students can demonstrate their English learning.

## **2.7 Individual**

Effective English learning requires learners to internalize their linguistic knowledge, to satisfy their individualized needs for language learning and develop their individualized learning style.

## **2.8 Participating**

English learners can achieve their leaning goals only by participating in English learning activities, contexts of language application and processes of applying acquired English knowledge to problem solving.

## **2.9 Comprehensive**

The comprehensiveness of effective English learning refers to that of language application, which includes two layers: the comprehensive application of language skills and the comprehensive output of fragmented knowledge acquired previously.

## **2.10 Emotional**

Effective English learning also requires the cultivation of positive emotions in learners, which include the favorable learning interest, learning motive and sense of self efficacy.

# **3 Deconstruction of traditional class: SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English**

The purpose of deconstruction is not to deny traditional classroom teaching, but to reconstruct college English classroom teaching, which is based on the detailed analysis, understanding and reflection of its teaching structure, elements and methods, to better realize its function in supporting and facilitating effective learning.

In view of the disadvantages of traditional classroom teaching, the concept of deconstruction is applied to examine the traditional college English classroom teaching, and based on the platform of SPOC, the social interaction and mobile learning are introduced to the process of effective learning.[7] In recent years, in order to facilitate the effective learning of college English, our university has piloted the model of

SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English, the five elements of which will be shown in the following Figure 1:

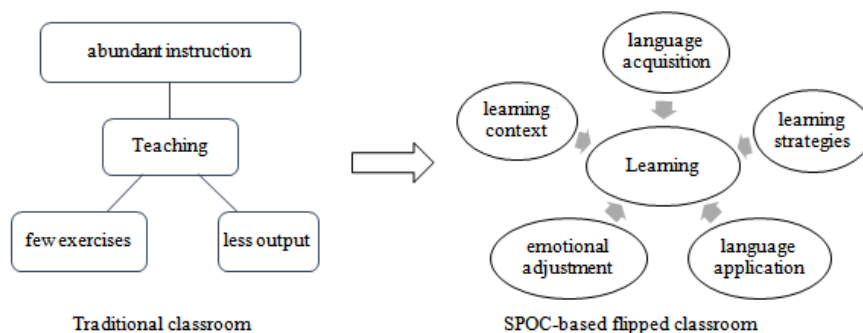


Fig. 1. Contrast in teaching elements of two English classrooms

### 3.1 Contrast in classroom teaching elements

Teacher, students and teaching materials are the basic teaching elements in English classroom teaching, however, under different classroom teaching models, these elements have different connotations.

Under traditional classroom teaching model, the teacher is the center, whose instruction of knowledge, based on teaching materials, occupies almost all the class time. There are indeed a few auxiliary exercises, which, however, cannot change the passive, spoon-fed essence of language learning for students. Moreover, those comprehensive, output-driven activities, such as debates, speeches and writing, etc., time-consuming as they are, cannot be carried out in the limited class time. Under this model, teaching is explicit, while learning is implicit, which does not accord with the feature of effective learning.

The SPOC-based flipped classroom model of college English makes effective learning the focus of classroom teaching and unites teaching and learning by deconstructing the dualistic opposition between teacher's abundant instruction and students' passive acceptance in traditional classroom teaching. By analyzing the key elements of effective learning and thus recombining them, it aims to reform the teaching structure of traditional classroom, in order to make learning explicit and teaching implicit. As shown in Figure 1, all the teaching elements in SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English will support students to transform from passive, spoon-fed learning to active interaction of effective learning.

### 3.2 Contrast between classroom teaching and after-class learning

Traditional classroom teaching and after-class learning cannot be effectively united, which are mainly shown in the following two aspects: firstly, the promotion of learning by teaching is realized by assigning the after-class exercises. However, since traditional classroom teaching cannot effectively record, monitor, measure and evaluate

the process of English learning and its results,[8] it becomes a critical issue how to guarantee that every students, especially in a large class, can finish the exercises attentively, and those after-class exercises do facilitate the effective learning. Secondly, teacher's instruction in class has little relevance to the exercises assigned. Furthermore, the time allotted for students to demonstrate their learning in class is limited that effective learning cannot be brought into practice.

The SPOC-based flipped classroom model of college English, by deconstructing the dualistic opposition between classroom teaching and after-class learning in traditional classroom teaching, integrates online autonomous learning with off-line community practice to make classroom teaching and after-class learning a valid unification. The SPOC-based online courses and mobile learning APPs, once introduced into the classroom teaching, have changed its structure and reconstructed its process. By applying information technologies to the recording, monitoring and evaluation of students' learning behavior and process,[9] either classroom teaching or after-class learning including learning context, knowledge acquisition, learning strategies, language application and emotional adjustment, can truly support and facilitate effective learning.

### **3.3 Contrast in extension of classroom teaching**

In traditional class, classroom teaching ends when the class is over. For most students, their English learning comes to a pause along with the ending of classroom learning.

The SPOC-based flipped classroom model of college English, by deconstructing the dualistic opposition between classroom learning and after-class learning deficiency in traditional classroom teaching, integrates online courses and mobile learning with teaching procedures, aiming to infinitely extend classroom teaching and allow every student fully engaged in learning.

### **3.4 Contrast in classroom teaching design**

A good classroom teaching design can arouse students' great interest in learning so that they can continuously perfect their language system and enhance their abilities in comprehensive application and critical thinking. However, traditional classroom teaching, exam-oriented and monotonous in its teaching design, cannot arouse students' interest in learning.

The SPOC-based flipped classroom model of college English breaks the monotony of classroom teaching design by deconstructing the dualistic opposition between exam-oriented teaching and ability of comprehensive application in traditional classroom teaching. By transferring knowledge instruction online, the classroom time is largely allotted to students for their sharing of learning. Various learning contexts are thus created by task-based classroom or online learning and interaction. For students, learning is not merely for examinations, while for the teacher, this model provides the necessary conditions for the classroom teaching design aiming at effective learning.

## 4 Reconstruction of classroom teaching: SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English

### 4.1 SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English: an effective learning model

The purpose of educational technology is to promote learning by means of technology.[10] SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English aims to create an effective English learning model, which consists of three core elements by the deconstruction and reconstruction of classroom teaching, i.e. SPOC-based learning, small class and off-line comprehensive application. After years of practice in our university, some favorable outcomes have been achieved, which will be analyzed in details as follows:

**SPOC-based learning:** It includes knowledge acquisition and online learning community. Firstly, the knowledge instruction, which originally occupies most of the class time, has been conducted online, when the teaching materials of each unit in the textbook are divided into six parts: text lead-in, text appreciation, sentence analysis, vocabulary explanation, cultural introduction and text summary. Students can carry out their autonomous learning and set their own learning pace according to their individualized needs. The SPOC platform technologies are applied to record, monitor and evaluate students' learning behaviors and process. Secondly, it has been proven by our practice that the SPOC-based learning can form an online learning community. During students' individualized learning process, English learning is no more an isolated behavior but one when students can ask and answer questions in the online community, share their own learning strategies and learn from their peers, and get involved in rich English learning environment. Besides peers, the teacher is also available online to guarantee students English learning.

**Small class:** With the support of SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English, the classroom teaching time is released and its structure is reconstructed. The small class after reconstruction has several features: firstly, it gives every student the opportunity to participate. There are about 30 students in small class, where the major learning procedures include creation of learning context, accomplishment of micro tasks, question answering, emotional adjustment, learning demonstration and class evaluation. Secondly, it pays more attention to the teaching design which will promote effective learning. Tasks of different levels of difficulties are designed for students to accomplish either in or after class alone or through teamwork. It needs to be pointed out that the sense of achievement students acquire in small class will definitely enhance their confidence and interest in English learning to promote their effective English learning. Thirdly, it applies mobile learning management APP to record, monitor and evaluate the classroom learning process in order to promote a fair and competitive learning. All the classroom activities and learning resources are released through APP and all the learning behaviors of each student are recorded, which makes the classroom teaching management more intellectualized.

**Off-line comprehensive application:** Under the model of SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English, all the learning procedures, including learning materi-

als, knowledge understanding, learning strategies and comprehensive application, are task-driven. Great emphasis has been placed upon the process of language application in order to facilitate the switch from language input to language output and thus achieve the comprehensive development of English language ability. Therefore, the off-line comprehensive application, as the third organic component in SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English and one of the most important parts in effective learning model, aims to extend the effect of classroom teaching and integrates classroom teaching with after-class learning. In order to fulfill various context-related tasks, students are required to establish an off-line community so that they can apply what they have learnt to interact and cooperate with each other.

#### 4.2 SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English: its support of effective learning

As shown in Figure 2, SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English supports effective learning from multiple perspectives:

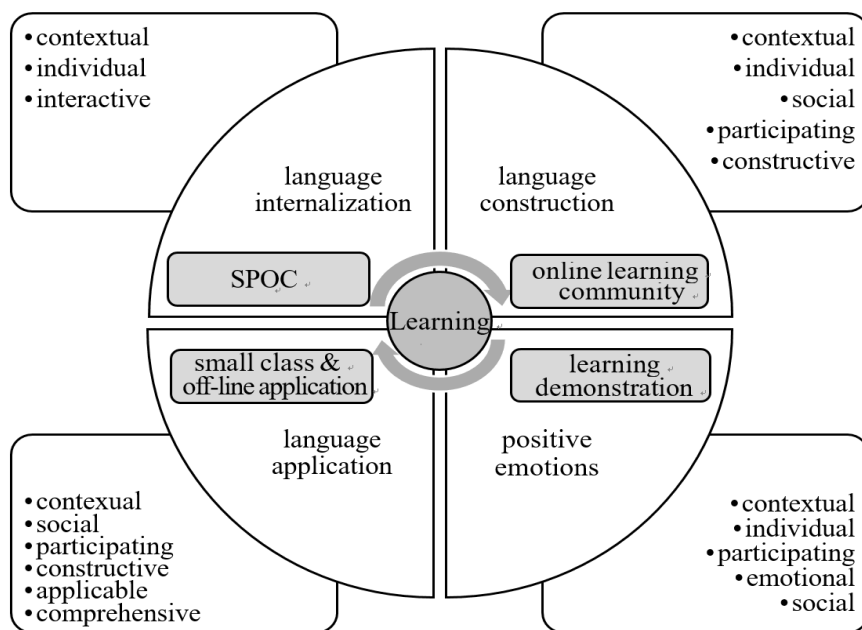


Fig. 2. SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English: its support of effective learning

**Supportive of language internalization:** Besides various learning resources for students to conduct individualized learning, SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English also provides the convenience of time and space. The SPOC-based teaching resources are developed by the professional teaching teams, which integrate their rich teaching experience and advanced teaching concept with the multi-modal means of information presentation. Based on the same theme, the rich course contents create

the real context for students' acquisition of language knowledge. The adaptive playing of micro-lesson videos and various exercises and tests provide means, tools and environment for the promotion of language internalization.[11]

**Supportive of language construction:** The interactive function of SPOC-based online forums and far-reaching social network prop up the establishment of online English learning communities, where students can participate in the communication and interaction with peers and the teacher, sharing their learning experience, resource and strategies, asking & answering questions and expressing ideas & opinions. In this way, the new knowledge is formed and consolidated, and language construction is realized in social application and situational contexts.

**Supportive of language application:** The various micro tasks and big projects, based on SPOC themes and contents in small class, provide authentic contexts of application for students, who, in the process of problem solving, can truly experience the sense of achievement brought by the comprehensive application of language, thus gradually constructing their ability in language application.

**Supportive of positive emotions:** Either the SPOC-based learning and online learning community or the small class and off-line comprehensive application, can contribute to the acquisition of sense of achievement, promotion of learning interest and enhancement of learning motivation in students' English learning. Furthermore, the SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English also utilizes such social interaction platforms as Microblog,[12] Twitter,[13] Wechat and QQ to introduce students' works in learning, which further help students to acquire positive emotions by gaining a sense of achievement in English learning.

## 5 Conclusion

It is never an easy job for the occurrence of effective English learning, which has been long hindered by the existing challenges in traditional classroom teaching. However, the emergence of online courses, mobile learning and flipped classroom provides new technology platform, tools and resources for college English classroom teaching to promote the occurrence of effective learning.[14] The SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English, which exhibits great vigor in the deconstruction of traditional classroom teaching and reconstruction of teaching and learning in English classroom teaching, is the outcome of in-depth integration of English classroom teaching and information technologies in modern education. In the era of big data, the SPOC-based flipped classroom of college English, can help construct an effective English learning model to further promote the college English teaching in China.

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