Applied Research of Mobile Technology to Hybrid English Teaching Pattern for Higher Vocational Education

Dan-lu LIAO

International Tourism Dept., Chongqing Vocational Institute of Tourism, Chonqing, P.R. China

Keywords: Mobile technology, Hybrid teaching mode, Vocational public English.

Abstract. In the 21st century, mobile technology and information technology change with each passing day, Wlan, 3G and 4G network coverage is becoming more and more extensive. With the development of teaching mode from unity to diversity, the application of mobile technology in English teaching in vocational colleges has become a new research field. Based on the theoretical studies of mobile learning and blended learning by domestic and foreign experts and scholars, this paper probes into the problems existing in the current public English teaching in vocational colleges, and constructs a hybrid English teaching model by combining mobile technology.

Research Background

As China further opens door to the outside world and the globalization tendency is advanced profoundly, economic and cultural exchanges between various countries and regions have also become increasingly close with a significantly elevated demand for application-oriented English talents, thus bringing forward higher requirements for English abilities of higher vocational college students in China. It’s definitely mentioned in Basic Requirements for English Course Teaching in Higher Professional and Vocational Education that English teaching should aim at cultivating students’ practical language skills. Moreover, teaching contents should highlight pertinence and practicability and stress on cultivating students’ practical interpersonal abilities using English especially listening and speaking abilities.

IT development has become faster and faster in the 21st century and lifestyle and learning style of college students have experienced great changes. The in-depth integration between IT and English courses has become the core of the present higher vocational English teaching reform. With rapid informatization development in higher education, blending-learning has fused advantages of traditional C-Learning and E-learning so that teachers’ enlightening, guiding and supervising functions can be fully exerted, and moreover, students’ creativity and initiatives can be effectively cultivated, which will contribute to improvement of students’ IT quality and their comprehensive qualities and abilities.

Theoretical Foundation

Mobile Learning Theory

The mobile learning concept appeared in the 1990s at the earliest namely the “Mobile Education” research program of University of California at Berkeley. Afterwards, domestic and foreign researchers have defined mobile language learning from their own research fields. Alexander Dye pointed out that mobile learning referred to learning of the owner holding a handheld mobile device whenever and wherever, and the mobile terminal equipment should have the following functions: it should effectively present learning contents and facilitate un blocked two-way communication between learners and teachers [1]. As a new-type e-learning mode, mobile learning is a perfect combination of two technologies: e-learning technology and mobile technology. John Traxler (2005) pointed out that the way that the learner learns and acquires teaching contents through the personal mobile equipment like tablet PC or smartphone was called mobile learning [2]. Mobile learning, which is an emerging learning pattern under the mobile information era with prominent effects, influences the traditional pedagogy to a great degree.
**Blending-Learning Theory**

Domestic and foreign researchers have started discussing about blending-learning very early. Margret proposed that blending-learning referred to a school combining other methods based on network technology in order to reach a specified teaching objective better, and this learning pattern fused multiple teaching means and technologies [3]. He K K (2004) pointed out that effective combination of advantages of the traditional learning method and E-learning advantages was namely blend-teaching, during this process, enlightening, guiding, supervising and organizing functions of teachers should be fully exerted, and meanwhile, attention should be paid to exertion of students’ creativity, initiative and self-motivation as learning subjects. It’s generally believed within the international educational technical field that traditional learning method and E-learning should complement each other’s advantages in order to reach the optimal learning effect [4]. Li J H translated Blending Learning in English into “融合性学习” and pointed out that blending-learning was a kind of optimized selection and combination of all teaching elements, which aimed at smoothly realizing teaching objectives and made it possible for teachers and students to proficiently utilize all kinds of teaching methods, technologies and learning methods according to practical teaching needs in the teaching activity [5].

**Necessity and Feasibility Analysis of the Application to Higher Vocational Public English Teaching**

**Main Features of Mobile Learning**

- **Mobility.** Learning doesn’t experience any spatial-temporal constraints under the traditional teaching pattern any longer, learning sites can be unfixed and students can learn whenever and wherever far from the traditional classroom environment. Learners can spend extracurricular time in accomplishing information acquisition and processing. They can learn in a real environment and establish learning relations under the school environment.

- **Adaptability.** Learners have sufficient free space and they don’t need to learn at preset time and position. Teachers learn to fully respect learning ability and expectation of each learner.

- **Spontaneity.** The most remarkable feature of mobile learning is spontaneity. It can create corresponding valuable learning resources according to the actual situation the learner is located so that neither teaching nor learning will be under temporal-spatial constraints. Therefore, learning can occur in a real and natural social context and learners can truly put what they learn into practice.

- **Privacy.** This feature means that at one time, usually only one person is allowed to use the mobile device, so the learner can keep relatively independent of other learners so as to acquire information and data he/she wants.

- **Informality.** For mobile learning, students don’t need to study step by step in strict accordance with the timetable or wear clothes by rule. No matter whether you wear formal clothes or pajamas when learning, nobody will interfere.

- **Interaction.** Mobile learning is certainly interactive, mainly because data information on the server is the precondition for learning. The learner must initiatively accept the information imparted by the teacher. In addition, interactive layers depend on functions of the learner’s mobile device.

- **Universality.** Nowadays electronic technology is presenting faster and faster development tendency with continuously declining prices of mobile devices, so more and more people can own mobile devices, and even children in remote areas or from low-income households as well as children in developing countries can timely acquire the latest teaching information.

- **Individualized Learning.** Mobile learning requires that the learner should take full advantages of the mobile device to formulate learning strategies according to his/her own situation. This learning pattern supports individualized, differential and autonomous learning patterns.

- **Situational Relevance.** Mobility, convenience, randomness and connectivity are prominent advantages of mobile learning. The learner can rapidly acquire related data under a specific context.
environment whenever and wherever so as to create an individualized and diversified mobile situation.

**Leading-Subject” Teaching Theory for Blending-Learning**

One of the teaching idea bases for establishing an IT and course integrated teaching pattern is “leading-subject” teaching theory. He K K (2005) pointed out effectively fusing information technology during the teaching process of various disciplines so as to create a new-type teaching environment, under which both leading function of the teacher and subject position of students can be sufficiently embodied. Therefore, the “autonomous, explorative and cooperative” teaching and learning mode can be truly realized, and this helps to cultivate students’ creativity and initiatives with full consideration of innovative spirit and practical abilities, which is integration of information technology and discipline curriculums. The idea proposed by He K K has been generally recognized in the domestic academic circles [6]. In the practical teaching process, leading roles of teachers should be fully exerted, including selecting learning contents and organizing the learning process, etc. Meanwhile, subject position of students should be truly manifested and they can autonomously learn and reflect on teaching contents. The above two points constitute the core of the IT and discipline integrated teaching pattern. In addition, the two parts—teaching and learning—should be practically unified. This teaching idea combined, we should pay attention to harmonious and benign interactive relationships among various elements including learning resources, learning environment, teachers and students during the occupational English teaching reform.

**Necessity and Feasibility Analysis of the Application to Higher Vocational Public English Teaching**

Mobile technology has been widely applied in multiple fields at present, which then proposes higher and higher requirements for higher vocational public English teaching. Therefore, in terms of the current vocational English educational reform, its core task is to fuse higher vocational public English teaching into the background environment—mobile technology—so that vocational education can achieve better development.

Besides, vocational English teaching needs to solve another realistic problem, namely fewer and fewer English teaching time (limited teaching time). Under this circumstance, teachers should try best to optimize the teaching process so that students can harvest the optimal learning effect in such tens of minutes. Therefore, more and more emphases are laid on mobile learning and blending-learning patterns during the design and practice of higher vocational English teaching. Only when e-learning and traditional classroom learning are fully combined can they really complement each other’s advantages.

The advantage of traditional C-learning lies in that it can give feedbacks about students’ learning status in a real-time way and timely solve problems encountered by students during the learning process. Nevertheless, it also has deficiencies like its teaching capacity is limited and it can’t satisfy students’ individualized learning demands. Relatively speaking, mobile learning can not only create a real language environment for learners but also make it possible for students to realize autonomous learning and collaborative learning and possess rather rich learning resources. However, deficiencies of mobile learning are: teachers have not participated in the learning process so that students’ learning effects will decline to a great degree without the teacher’s guidance. After reform of traditional English c-teaching and optimization of English mobile learning courses, blending-learning has been proposed. This learning pattern can not only give full play to students’ learning initiatives and cultivate their practical abilities and creative thinking but also can give enough freedom to students in learning by virtue of teachers’ activities like reasonably designing teaching contents. Teachers participate in the whole learning process and play a guiding role. Moreover, this learning pattern can embody students’ learning initiatives and effectively improve learning effects and teaching quality.

Mobile learning theory and blending-learning theory have been extensively utilized in various teaching fields so far. In-depth discussions have been carried out on how mobile learning method
should be utilized in English teaching so that its effectiveness can be exerted to the greatest extent in the academic circles [7]. Guo H X (2011) probed deeply into Chinese college students’ interest in mobile learning, and investigation result showed that domestic college students showed their thick interest in mobile learning in the current phase. It’s pointed out in this report that on the whole, college students take delight in mobile English learning, but they have had unclear understanding of connotation and features of mobile English learning; English learning with the help of a mobile device is a highly feasible learning pattern but it proposes higher requirements for learning contents like richness, colorfulness, terseness but forcefulness, and moreover, it highly demands for student-teacher interaction. Nevertheless, college students’ interest in mobile English learning will not last for a long time. Therefore, importance should still be attached to teacher-student interaction so that network English learning contents can be more abundant. College students can really participate in mobile English learning only by virtue of multiple measures and means [8].

Hence, it can be seen that a unique English teaching pattern will be formed through an effective combination of mobile learning and blending-learning. Under the mobile learning pattern, English teachers can impart teaching contents related to teaching contents like language skills to students after class so that classroom interaction can realize extension in a real sense. In addition, mobile language teaching makes it possible for students to freely choose learning time and space, fully motivates students’ degree of participation in language learning, and encourages more students to be engaged in informal learning.

**Application of Mobile Technology to Higher Vocational Public English Blend-Teaching Pattern**

Theoretical knowledge and literature documents related to mobile learning and blending-learning are summarized in this paper so as to obtain advantages of mobile learning and c-learning. Then a blend-teaching pattern using mobile technology in higher vocational public English teaching is put forward.

**Design of Blending-Learning Environment**

The absence of a real language learning environment is an important cause restricting higher vocational English teaching quality. After an in-depth exploration into the integration of information technology and English courses, mobile technologies like network, APP, QQ and Wechat have provided a new idea for teaching of teachers and learning of students. Nevertheless, it’s difficult for both virtual e-learning environment and traditional c-learning environment to provide a perfect language learning environment for teaching and learning activities of teachers and students, and both of them have their own advantages and disadvantages in the aspect of cultivating students’ English language skills and professional qualities.

Higher vocational English features strong applicability and practicability. Therefore, integrating the above two teaching patterns is acknowledged in this paper in order to create a blending-learning environment fusing virtuality and reality and give full play to advantages of teachers and students under the two different learning environments. First of all, an individualized knowledge learning environment can be established through real emotional interaction and exchange between teachers and students and between students under the traditional teaching pattern. Secondly, under e-learning environment, students can realize free and flexible learning (no temporal-spatial restrictions) with the help of mobile terminal devices. Students use mobile technologies like cellphones and tablet PCs to learn and absorb knowledge through platforms such as courseware, network, Wechat course and flipped classroom; students can learn wantonly in a real language environment by virtue of all kinds of interactive platforms like Wechat, and all kinds of problems appearing in autonomous learning can be solved through interaction between teachers and students and that between students. This learning environment blending can realize complementary advantages between traditional c-learning and e-learning more effectively and reach optimal teaching effect.
Design of Blending-Learning Strategies

Teachers should lay emphasis on design of learning strategies when designing teaching activities, flexibly utilize multiple teaching means such as task-based teaching and question-inquiry teaching and combine teaching contents and teaching objectives to effectively utilize autonomous learning and collaborative learning.

In this way, students can independently complete mobile learning or conduct collaborative learning through mobile technologies, including training of English listening and speaking. In the meantime, teachers can independently design learning links through the flipped classroom teaching strategy, like assigning tasks to students in English learning or listening and speaking in advance so that they can arbitrarily combine these learning contents (or distributed by the teacher according to the practical situation). Two students forming a group, they download related teaching videos through equipment like cellphones before the class and then other groups will repeat after and simulate together. Subsequently, teachers and students will jointly discuss on the flipped classroom.

Design of Blend-Teaching Media and Learning Resources

Medium is an important path for information carrying and spreading. Media used in the teaching task are called teaching media, with their main effects being providing assistance and convenience for teaching and learning activities for the sake of further communication between teachers and students and that between students. Language and blackboard and so on are traditional teaching media; visual media and synthetic operation media all constitute one part of modern teaching media [9]. Under mobile learning and blending-learning theories, we should give full play to advantages of modern teaching means like multimedia teaching so that students’ interest in learning can be sufficiently motivated without temporal-spatial constraints. This can help students to set up active and initiative learning consciousness. The importance should be attached to interaction and exchange between teachers and students so that the teaching process can be further optimized and teaching quality and teaching efficiency can be significantly strengthened.

All kinds of related resources from text, graph to video and animation belong to learning resources. So-called design of learning resources refers to defining categories of information resources needed by the learning subject and the effects they exert like where to acquire learning resources and how to utilize these resources in order that their effects can be fully exerted, etc. [10]. In the current process, problems generally existing in the construction process of learning resources are manifested by the absence of a unified overall design scheme, absence of a comprehensive analysis of teacher and student demands and the absence of timely tracking and feedback of concrete effects in the practical utilization process, etc. Hence, in the mobile learning process, we should take full advantages of auxiliary English learning resources provided by information technology so that teaching contents can become richer and perfecter and resources can be shared in order to facilitate effective improvement of English teaching efficiency.

Design of a Blended Evaluation Method

Evaluating learning process and learning effect of learners is called teaching evaluation. Diagnostic evaluation, summative evaluation and formative evaluation are three main teaching evaluation modes in the current phase. Domestic English teaching evaluation method was quite single in the past, but now China is more and more inclined to diversified evaluation methods. An evaluation system combining formative evaluation and summative evaluation is proposed in this paper. Even though the evaluation system for the current domestic Public English courses centers on formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Nevertheless, many schools more tend to summative evaluation during the concrete implementation process. In terms of higher vocational public English blend-teaching pattern based on mobile technologies, an evaluation system “emphasizing summative evaluation while neglecting summative evaluation” is proposed in this paper, where 70% is formative evaluation and 30% is summative evaluation. During the whole teaching process, learning task completion status and results of students will be evaluated from multiple layers like inside and outside the classroom, this is the main operating method of formative
evaluation; at the end of term, summative evaluation will be made through written examinations. This evaluation system can strengthen students’ English learning motives so that they can reflect upon problems encountered in the learning process and continuously improve their learning attitudes and methods. Furthermore, it can help teachers to adjust their teaching according to students’ learning status.

Conclusions

To sum up, the blend-teaching pattern of higher vocational public English can effectively utilize mobile learning pattern, integrate traditional c-learning and e-learning and fuse teacher-centered teaching and student-centered teaching. In the higher vocational English teaching, teachers’ guiding and supervising effects should be effectively exerted and students’ learning subjectivity can be sufficiently embodied. Intervention of mobile technologies will also fully mobilize students’ English learning initiatives and endow students more free and flexible learning time and space. As a result, teachers can obtain feedback timely about their courses, and finally teaching effect of higher vocational public English courses and students’ comprehensive proficiency in applying English can be effectively improved.

Acknowledgement

This research was financially supported by Chongqing Vocational Education Society, Program No. 2017-ZJXH-19013; Planning Leading Group of the National Vocational Education Office, Program No. 2018QZJ169; Foreign Language Teaching Steering Committee of Vocational Colleges, Program No. 2018CQ0016B.

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