

## Qualitative research about the evaluation of the online College English System

### Background of the survey

#### The online English learning system: NCE

This online English Learning System NCE <http://jwc.hubu.edu.cn/nce05/is> mainly composed of five parts

1. course(view, listen and speak, reading and writing, which form the content of a whole unit)
2. Test yourself(test after each unit, the students need to pass the test to go to the next unit)
3. online community (a platform for communication among teachers, students and teacher-student communication, a chat room for synchronized conversation)
4. English for fun (games for vocabulary learning)
5. Reference (text/audio/visual English learning materials, teachers can also upload materials here).

#### Organisation of the B-learning course

The whole course is a blended learning module. The student attends 4-hour classroom learning and the teachers give instructions of the online tasks. They are allowed to go to the online learning centre to have a 2-hour on line course every week, where they try to finish the online assignments and fill in a self-report form(mainly for teachers)

- Classroom learning: explanation, checking and discussion
  - Intensive reading: the teacher gives lectures for this course. for example, the explanation of grammatical parts, the important or difficult language points, the construction and the appreciation of the article, etc. so as to achieve a thorough comprehension of the text. What's more, the teacher points out what should be learnt after class and assign proper tasks for the online learning.
  - Listening and Speaking: the teacher allocates the online listening tasks and check in class: either to design some exercises to see whether the students understand them or design some oral task to see how well they respond according to their understanding of the listening materials. Different methods can be adopted here, which is also what I want to get to know in details in the survey.

- Online learning:

- students do listening and speaking exercises plus 2-3 short fast-reading training exercises
- students can find references to help review what they've learnt in classroom
- submitting assignment (mainly writing task, but the writing task don't have to be finished on line)
- peer or teacher-student communication

### **Learning hour allocation**

The students attend the classroom teaching 4 hours every week and a 2-hour course in online learning centre.

### **Learning material**

It consists of textbooks of intensive reading, extensive reading, listening and speaking, and grammar exercises. All these materials can be found in NCE (the online English learning system), which means that students can have easy access to the above learning materials (the same as those in textbooks), especially the audio/visual ones.

### **The purposes of the course:**

1. to foster students' self-regulated learning ability through the online course
2. to test the online English learning system

### **The survey**

**The purpose** of this survey is to get teacher's feedback of the experiment of this B-learning learning course. There was a general teaching plan for this course, while each teacher involved were given some freedom to design his/her course, which explains why the survey is worthwhile.

1. to know in details about teachers' experience of the B-learning course
2. to know in details the problems about the course design
3. to see the possibilities to improve the system so as to help to foster students' self-regulation

### **Dimensions of the survey**

1. The whole organization of the B-learning course
2. The allocation of the learning hour
3. The allocation of the learning content
4. The design, the submission and the feedback of the assignment

### **Survey questions**

1. What's your general impression of the experience of giving this blended learning course?

2. Do you think the time collocation for the blended learning reasonable?
3. If not, what kind of time collocation would you suggest, and why?
  
4. How did you arrange the learning materials in this course?
5. Did you find any difficulties in balancing the online learning material and the in class learning material? If yes, how did you overcome them in your course?
  
6. How do you usually check students' assignment, give feedback individually in forum or give overall comments in class? And why?
7. How do you check students' performance of listening and speaking assignments?
  
8. How often do you use BBS to communicate with your students?
9. For what purpose, for example, giving consultation, answering question, etc?
10. In what way do you find it helpful to ease the communication between teacher and students?
  
11. How did you motivate your students to participate the online activities, especially when they have difficulties to overcome the anxiety?
  
12. Did you encounter any problems in teaching this blended-learning course?
13. If yes, what are they? And how do you cope with them?

### **Carrying out the survey**

I did the survey with three of my colleagues who were involved in the online English programme. The whole team consists of 5 teachers, three of whom are now in other countries doing study or research related to e-learning. But we keep contact and the interviews were done through msn.

Each interview last for about 20 to 25 minutes. During each interview, I addressed the question and they gave me the answer. We both typed in English so there was not much transcription work for me after the interview. I deleted some of the irrelevant dialogues when recorded the conversation. But later on when I started to decode the information units, I found that some important information was missing. So it was a pity that I failed in keeping all the raw data in the wiki, which should be improved in next survey.

### **Result**

In the first decoding of the transcription, I summarized the 100 information units of the three interviews in 12 categories under the 7 dimensions. As what I have previewed, I made some change in the second and the third decoding based on the first version and the finally agreed on the 9 categories under the 7 dimension. The detailed interpretation is as follows:

#### global comment on the B-learning course

New experience from the traditional way to versatile ways to teach  English
New experience to blend two teaching methods in one course
Provide flexibilities of when and where to do the online learning
a challenge for both teachers and students
good communication among teachers and students is necessary
Experience different emotions during the course
online system needs to be improved

From the above table, we see that globally the B-learning course is a new experience for the teachers. It blends two teaching methods in one course, which is quite different from the traditional way. What's more, it provides flexibilities of learning time and learning place. However, the online system needs to be improved and the importance of the communication between teachers and students should not be ignored.

#### allocation of learning hours

Reasonable
Managing learning hours according to the teaching plan
the allocation of learning hours needs to be improved
More online learning hour should be allocated: at the beginning of the course, 3 hours per week, for listening tasks

The teachers agree that the general allocation of learning hours is reasonable, but needs small modifications. They gave suggestions like allocate more learning hours at the beginning of the course, and more time for listening tasks.

#### Allocation and management of learning materials

Online resources serve as extra learning materials
Allocate learning materials according to the teaching plan
Some online exercises finished offline
Management of learning materials are clearly presented in the teaching plan , so no difficulty in following it
Balance learning materials well in online and in-class learning

Since the learning materials are allocated according to his teaching plan based on the topic of each unit, there is not much problem for the teachers to manage them. There is one teacher interviewed selected certain online resource as extra learning material.

#### Task allocation

Extra learning task for advanced students
Repetitive learning task for the less advanced
Redo certain online tasks if many failed
different tasks for students from different majors

The teachers allocated differently the task according to students' level.

<b>submission ways of assignments</b>
submit in-class tasks in class or after class
Submit paper study record for online tasks
Submit writing tasks in BBS
Use Forum to discuss assignments

The in-class assignments were submitted either in class or after class, while the online assignments were submitted via BBS or Forum. The study also serves as part of the assignment.

<b>Give feedback of assignments</b>
Give overall comment to in-class tasks or online tasks , to knowledge type tasks
Give immediate overall comment to in-class oral tasks
Give individual feedback in BBS
Select good examples for certain tasks
Give individual feedback for writing tasks
Give group-based feedback for group task
Participate in the discussion of assignments in Forum

Teachers adopt give overall comment to in-class or online tasks (mostly knowledge type assignment) and give individual feedback in BBS for writing task or group work. Besides, they select good examples for certain tasks and participate in the discussion in Forum.

<b>check of the assignments</b>
Use in-class test or quiz to check listening tasks
Check online study record
Use in-class oral practice to check oral tasks: report, presentation, pair work, group discussion, role play

Teachers use quiz or test to check listening tasks and in-class oral practice to see how well the students communicate orally. The study record also serves as a good way to check.

<b>frequency of using BBS</b>
Use BBS very often, at least 3 times a week, at least once a day
Using BBS has become a habit
New posts can be found each time when I logged in

BBS, as a communication tool among teachers and the students, is very often used.

<b>fonctions of BBS</b>
to respond to every question, give feedback ,offer solutions , give suggestions or consultation, exchange opinions with students

BBS is flexible in time and location
BBS helps to avoid embarrassment ,overcome shyness
to give emotional support
BBS helps to write to learn

BBS serves in many ways as presented in the above table. The teachers report using it to respond to every question, give feedback ,offer solutions , give suggestions or consultation, exchange opinions with students. BBS is flexible to use and can help to overcome shyness and helps to write to learn. One teacher even uses it to give emotional support to her students.

<b>ways to motivate students</b>
Initiate interesting topics and organise regular activities
Give stimulus, like an extra score for participation to motivate students
Post on BBS to appraise every progress of the students
Face-to-face talk to encourage the students

Initiating interesting topics and activities, giving extra scores for participation together with putting post on BBS to appraise every progress are the methods teachers chose to motivate students.

<b>problems</b>
Technical problem: unstable system
Students' lack of regulation
Some tasks are over demanding
The online system needs to be improved
The allocation of learning hours needs to be improved
More leaning hours should be allocated for online tasks
the allocation of learning hours needs to be improved
Some online resources overlap textbook materials

In fact, when I finished my decoding of the data, I found that there should be another one presenting the problems during the process of this B-learning course. So I put them together and found it very important for the purpose of the survey.

<b>solutions or suggestions to the problems</b>
Ask help from IT
Give suggestions and strategically training to develop students' self-regulation
More online learning hour should be allocated, for example, 3 hours per week
More online learning hour for listening tasks
Extra learning task for advanced students
Repetitive learning task for the less advanced
Learning material allocation depends on the topic
Ask help from IT to solve technical problems
More learning hours are necessary especially at the beginning of the course

Allocate different tasks for students from different majors
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Ask help from IT to solve technological problems
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The teachers proposed good solutions to the above problems which are very important for the improvement of the future adaptation of the B-learning course.