Vol.2 No.2 2021
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Research on the Application of Blended Teaching Mode based on SPOC in Japanese Elective Course in Colleges and Universities

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Abstract: *As an important channel for college students to learn Japanese and understand Japan, Japanese elective course has attracted more and more attention in recent years. Under the traditional teaching mode, there are some problems in it, such as unsatisfied learning needs and unsustainable learning motivation, which have an impact on course satisfaction and teaching effect. This paper constructs a hybrid teaching mode based on SPOC, and carries out a semester's experimental research in Japanese elective courses in colleges and universities. The results show that the new teaching mode is significantly better than the traditional teaching mode in the cultivation of students' language application ability and teaching effect. The results are closely related to the fact that the teaching activities follow the second language acquisition theory and the teaching design provides environmental support.*

Keywords: *SPOC; Blended teaching model; Japanese; Elective courses; Applied research*

Introduction

In recent years, with the continuous deepening of the exchanges between China and Japan in the fields of politics, economy, and culture, the influence of Japanese and Japanese culture in China has gradually increased. More and more foreign language lovers have taken the initiative to open the way of personal Japanese learning. According to statistics, as of 2018, there are 1,004,625 Japanese learners in China. Japanese has become the second largest foreign language after English. As a general education course that enriches the knowledge structure of college students, satisfies interest needs, and enhances personal literacy, college elective courses play a huge auxiliary role in the cultivation of undergraduate talents. Similarly, the Japanese elective courses not only provide Japanese enthusiasts with opportunities to learn Japanese cultural knowledge and cross-cultural communication skills, but also create conditions for them to consult professional materials, study abroad in Japan, and find employment in Japanese companies. However, due to the unclear goals of the Japanese language course, limited class schedule, lack of teaching materials, single teaching methods, insufficient classroom interaction, low learning initiative and low emphasis, etc. (Wang, 2017; Chi, 2013), students' learning effects are low, and their learning motivation is low. It is difficult to maintain for a long time, and later gradually loses interest and confidence in Japanese learning, and then fails to build a systematic language structure, which also has a negative impact on its subsequent education, job hunting, and travel. This article based on SPOC's online and offline hybrid teaching mode provides new ideas for solving the common problems of the above Japanese elective courses. However, due to the unclear

objectives of the Japanese language course, limited class schedule, insufficient teaching materials, single teaching methods, insufficient classroom interaction, low learning initiative and low emphasis, etc. (Wang, 2017; Chi, 2013), students' learning effects are not obvious and their learning motivation is not sustainable. At the later stage, students gradually lose their interest and confidence in learning Japanese, unable to build a systematic language structure, which will have a negative impact on their subsequent study, job hunting and travel.

Overview

SPOC (Small Private Online Course) was first proposed by Professor Fox in 2014. It is mainly opened for campus learners and off-campus online learners in colleges and universities, and combines the blended teaching mode of physical classroom and online education (Hoffmann, 2013). This mode is highly private, highly professional, highly targeted and dynamic, which is the inheritance, perfection and transcendence of MOOC (Kang, 2014).

In the teaching process, teachers can flexibly adjust teaching resources, teaching content, and teaching activities according to the learning behavior data provided by the course platform, so as to implement precise teaching guidance and ensure the achievement of teaching goals. Compared with the traditional teaching mode, the blended teaching mode based on SPOC integrates online high-quality teaching resources with offline efficient classroom practice. It has many advantages: 1. A wide variety of quality learning resources are provided to enhance interest in learning and to develop in-depth learning (Zeng, Li & Zhou, 2015); 2. Redefine the role of teachers, and create conditions for teachers to transfer limited time to face-to-face instruction and communication, which is a high-value activity (He & Cao, 2015); 3. The problem-based teaching activity design increases the opportunity for students to interact, endows them with a complete and in-depth learning experience, improves the efficiency of knowledge construction, transfer and application, and ensures the effective internalization of curriculum knowledge (Kang, 2014; Zeng, Li & Zhou, 2015). 4. To meet the individualized learning needs of students, they can flexibly carry out the time and place for new knowledge learning, review, summary, and reflection according to their personal circumstances, and reduce the limitation of unified progress.

In China, research on the application of SPOC in foreign language teaching in colleges and universities started in 2015. Wang Na, Lu Haiyan, Zhang Zhou, Cheng Shaoyun, etc. were based on Effective Learning Theory (Wang, Chen & Zhang, 2016), Maker Teaching Theory (Lu, 2014), Post Method Theory (Wang & Zhang, 2016), and other teaching concepts, relying on different platforms such as Cloud Class (Cheng & Yang, 2017), Chinese MOOC, etc., build a hybrid teaching model based on SPOC. The related research mainly focuses on the design of teaching environment, teaching process, teaching activities and the development of evaluation indicators, and tests the effect of the new teaching mode through questionnaire survey, performance comparison, teacher-student interview, classroom observation and other methods. At the same time, due to the new teaching mode to meet the personalized requirements, students show a positive learning attitude: learning interest, learning motivation, teacher-student interaction, concentration, classroom attendance have been significantly improved. With regard to the research object, the new teaching mode is not only suitable for the reform of foreign language curriculum, but also has the same effect in ESP courses

Vol.2 No.2 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.015

of journalism English (Liang & Yu, 2018), English academic writing (Zheng, 2019), English interpretation (Wang, 2019), civil aviation English (Zhang & Wu, 2015), especially in Russian grammar teaching (Xu, 2020).

Through the above research results, we can find that the new teaching model based on SPOC is effective, which is helpful to solve the disadvantages of the traditional teaching model, such as the lack of motivation, the short interest duration, the few practice opportunities and the low quality of teaching. On the other hand, due to the lack of online learning resources, the reform of SPOC teaching mode is still rare, and the test of its application effect is even more scarce.

Research and Design

Questions

In order to test the application effect of SPOC-based blended teaching mode in college Japanese elective courses, this paper sets up research questions as follows: 1. In terms of language application ability, whether the new teaching mode is better than the traditional teaching mode. 2. Whether the new teaching mode is better than the traditional teaching mode in terms of teaching effect.

Objects

This study selects sophomore students from an undergraduate college in Guangdong Province as the research objects, including 90 in the experimental class and 90 in the control class. The ratio of male to female students in the two classes is similar, and the number of liberal arts and science majors is similar. Before the start of the course, the students in the two classes both have experienced a year in university, are familiar with the teaching environment, teaching methods, etc., and have no Japanese foundation.

Tools

The research data of this experiment is mainly composed of final test scores and questionnaire survey data. The final test score is the student's written test score. The test questions are mainly composed of the real questions of the International Japanese Language Proficiency Test (N5), covering the three dimensions of memorization, comprehension, and application. The final test is conducted in two classes at the same time, aiming to examine the changes in the language application ability of the students in the two classes.

The questionnaire survey includes 8 structural questions. The questionnaire is in the form of a Likert Five-level Scale, and the respondent completes the scoring of the discourse expression according to their personal circumstances (1=very disapproved; 2=disapproved; 3=normal; 4=approved; 5=very approved). The questionnaire survey was carried out in two classes after the course. The purpose was to investigate the new teaching model's course satisfaction, learning demand satisfaction, recognition of classroom practice activities, learning enthusiasm, continuity of learning motivation, changes in learning interest, participation in classroom practice activities and teacher-student relationship.

Research Design

This experiment was carried out in a public elective course of "Basic Japanese" in a university in Guangdong Province in September 2019. It lasted 16 weeks and 32 class hours. In order to control the variable interference, the teacher in this experiment is the author, and the teaching materials used in the two classes are exactly the same. The only difference is that the experimental class adopts the SPOC-based mixed teaching mode, and the control class uses the traditional teaching mode.

During the course registration stage, we put forward qualification restrictions on students based on the design requirements of the SPOC teaching model. Teachers clearly stated in the guide for application of public elective courses that "course applicants need to have certain information tool application capabilities" so that participants can carry out online learning normally.

After the course starts, the teacher first introduces the blended teaching process to the experimental class students through the pilot class, clarifies the specific requirements of online learning and offline practice, elaborates the course evaluation method, and helps students shorten the adaptation time. After the instructional lesson, the teacher logs on to the experimental platform "Superstar Learning" app to process student login information, and divides the class into 16 groups at random, with 5 to 6 people in each group. At the same time, teachers also need to prepare online teaching resources used in this experiment, design sections, and establish groups. The online resource is a micro-class video adapted by the teacher based on "Basic Japanese". The content is rich and the explanation is clear, which is suitable for the level of the students of the school.

The course officially started in the second teaching week, using a SPOC-based online and offline blended teaching model. The specific teaching process is as follows:

1. Online Learning before Class

One week before the start of the course, the teacher will release the task list, learning requirements, and pre-class test assignments through the "Superstar Learning" platform. The course task list includes the course's teaching objectives, difficult knowledge, video study guides and knowledge structure mind maps to help students clearly understand the main content of online learning and formulate a plan that meets their personal learning habits. At this stage, students can carry out online self-learning based on the course task list, complete pre-class assignments, and feedback questions encountered during the learning process to the course online forum to initiate course discussions.

After the homework is submitted, the teacher obtains the pre-class learning situation according to the homework score analysis function provided by the platform, and adjusts the teaching plan accordingly to provide data support for precise interaction and effective learning. In addition, teachers can view and reply to students' messages when browsing the discussion area, and judge the difficulties in online learning. Students receive pre-class homework score feedback based on the corrections, and discover their shortcomings in time, thereby enhancing the purpose and pertinence of offline classroom learning.

Vol.2 No.2 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.015

2. Offline Practice in Class

Offline classroom practice includes two parts: "Teacher Lecture" and "Student Group Practice". The teacher divides the teaching content of this semester into six topics: basic Japanese pronunciation (8 class hours), guided lessons (2 class hours), and final test (2 class hours). Each of the remaining topics is allocated 4 class hours. Among them, the teacher's lecture, Q&A and student group practice occupy 2 hours respectively.

In the offline course stage, the teacher first uses a mind map to show students the structural relationship between the learning content, and helps students recall the content of self-learning before class, sorting out and establishing a correct knowledge structure. Afterwards, around the problems before class, the teacher organized the students to discuss and solve the problems. Considering that students are at the beginning stage of Japanese learning, it is necessary for teachers to inspire students from multiple angles.

In the second stage of classroom teaching, teachers mainly complete the teaching of vocabulary, grammar, and text content, while interspersing with language practice activities such as vocabulary selection and sentence pattern translation. Relying on the platform's online display function, students can share the results of students' output and enhance students' sense of learning efficiency. On the other hand, teachers can also use online data analysis to keep abreast of classroom learning and adjust teaching strategies.

One week after the completion of the second stage of teaching, the third stage begins. The main content of this stage is the students' group language practice—the topic speech or group dialogue. At the end of the second stage, students will upload the speech draft or conversation text to the online discussion area after completing the theme practice task, and teachers will correct it, so that students can remember the correct language and get ready for the offline presentation.

In the third stage of the offline class, each group presented tasks in sequence. Teachers make targeted comments on the highlights and shortcomings of the group, publish the results, refine and summarize the practical problems, so as to consolidate the effect of new knowledge construction.

3. Online Summary after Class

After the practical course is over, the teacher will assign homework for the problems exposed in practice to correct students' cognition. At the same time, open the next topic learning section for students to learn online before class. The "Stage Mode" of the learning platform means that students can only start the next unit after completing the requirements of the current unit, which facilitates the supervision of students' after-class learning. If you encounter unsolvable problems in the above study, students can leave a message in the discussion area to seek help from classmates and teachers. At this point, the unit teaching process is over.

In contrast, the control class adopts the traditional teaching mode. Before class, students preview according to the content of the textbook. In class, teachers explain vocabulary, grammar, text, etc., and cooperate with relevant learning practice activities. After class, teachers randomly assign assignments related to teaching materials. Due to the lack of pre class micro class learning, the teaching time under the traditional teaching mode is relatively long (5 class hours for each topic on average), so the time to carry out language practice

training is compressed.

Data Collection and Processing

According to the above teaching mode and process, this study carried out a one semester teaching practice. After the end of the semester, we obtained the experimental data of the two classes through the final test and questionnaire survey. A total of 180 people participated in the final test, all the test results are true and effective. In addition, 180 questionnaires were collected and all valid. The data were analyzed by SPSS 22.0.

Experimental Results and Discussion

Analysis of the New Teaching Mode to Improve Language Application Ability

Before the experiment, there was no significant difference in Japanese language ability between the two classes, and they had no Japanese learning foundation. At the end of the experiment, we conducted independent sample t test to reflect the students' written test scores (reflecting the comprehensive ability of language use). The results showed (Table 1) that there was a difference in the language application ability between the experimental class and the control class (MD=11.78). The students' scores in the experimental group were significantly higher than those in the control group ($t=4.262$, $DF=178$, $P<0.05$). Therefore, it can be inferred that the hybrid teaching mode based on SPOC is significantly better than the traditional teaching mode in cultivating students' language application ability in public elective courses.

Further analysis of the data results shows that the students in the experimental class have significantly higher scores in terms of vocabulary, reading, and sentence pattern application than the control class (Table 1). This proves that the new teaching model is significantly better than the traditional teaching model in improving students' memorization, comprehension, application and other teaching goals.

Table 1. Comparative test results of the old and the new teaching models in the cultivation of language proficiency

	Experimental class (n=90)		Control class (n=90)			
	M	SD	M	SD	MD	t
Total score	59.44	18.85	47.67	18.23	11.78	4.262**
Vocabulary score	26.28	9.197	22.94	9.448	3.333	2.398*
Reading scores	15.06	5.925	13.00	6.82	2.056	2.158*
Application scores	18.11	6.974	11.72	7.196	6.389	6.048**

* for $P < 0.05$, ** for $P < 0.01$

Vol.2 No.2 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.015

Analysis of the New Teaching Mode in Improving the Teaching Effect

Based on the questionnaire survey data, through independent sample t-test, the data of the experimental class and the control class in the dimension of learning emotion were statistically analyzed. The experimental data showed that the scores of the experimental class in each evaluation index were significantly higher than those of the control class (Table 2). Therefore, it can be judged that the new teaching mode is significantly better than the traditional teaching mode in improving the teaching effect.

Table 2 Comparative test results of the new and old teaching modes in improving teaching effect

	Experimental class (n=90)		Control class (n=90)			
	M	SD	M	SD	MD	t
Course satisfaction	4.47	0.622	3.70	0.880	0.767	6.751**
Interest satisfaction	4.04	0.669	3.39	0.730	0.656	6.283**
Study enthusiasm	3.94	0.770	3.24	0.798	0.700	5.991**
Language practice	4.11	0.694	3.38	0.815	0.733	6.497**
Formal recognition	3.98	0.764	3.37	0.999	0.611	4.608**
Participation in language practice	3.73	0.958	3.07	1.015	0.667	4.534**
Activity enthusiasm	4.02	0.793	3.61	0.803	0.411	3.456**
Learning motivation persistence	4.61	0.513	4.43	0.582	0.178	2.176*

* for $P < 0.05$, ** for $P < 0.01$

Discussion

The above data analysis results show that the hybrid teaching mode based on SPOC is significantly better than the traditional teaching mode in improving students' language ability and course teaching effect, which effectively solves many existing problems of Japanese elective courses in colleges and universities under the traditional teaching mode. The reasons are as follows:

1. Language learning in line with the rules of second language acquisition theory, practice is conducive to the improvement of language application ability

The design of learning activities based on the new teaching model follows the foreign language teaching theory and the rules of second language acquisition. At the same time, the combination of online and offline technologies can effectively improve learners' language learning goals at the levels of memory, understanding and application.

First of all, in terms of vocabulary memorization, the new teaching model breaks the traditional rote memorization method, and flexibly uses the theory of "prefabricated language chunks" (Alison, 2002). Vocabulary explanations are combined with common sentence expressions, and the explanation text is added to the learning platform for students to view and understand in depth at any time. At the same time, pre-class exercises usually include word-filling and application exercises to enhance students' sensitivity

to prefabricated language blocks, shorten the process of transforming short-term memory of declarative knowledge to long-term memory of procedural skills, and realize vocabulary understanding and memory.

Secondly, in terms of language knowledge understanding, the new teaching model provides students with abundant online learning resources. In the teacher's knowledge point explanation micro-classes, subtitles are provided, and the key points and difficulties of learning are reminded by means of bold, red, underlined, and annotations, which arouses students' "selective attention". In addition, teachers also provide students with auxiliary learning tools such as online dictionaries and e-reference books, as well as auxiliary materials such as videos and audios, to help students achieve comprehensible input at the i+1 theoretical level (Stephen, 1981) and achieve effective language acquisition.

Thirdly, in terms of language application ability, the new teaching mode provides students with a lot of practical opportunities for language output. Sentence translation, topic setting speech and group discussion in class significantly increase students' chances of discourse expression and language output, so that they can increase the use of prefabricated chunks and language frames in practice, find language "loopholes", and constantly verify and adjust personal foreign language learning hypotheses through language form negotiation, so as to improve their language application ability and realize the self-learning of language expression It's dynamic. At the same time, students have a real learning environment, improve the sense of presence of language use, which is conducive to enhance their learning confidence.

Fourthly, under the new teaching mode, teachers can correct and give feedback in time. Before the presentation of the practical tasks, the teacher corrects and corrects the student’s practical results in the form of a document, and provides a sample recording for the student to imitate. This approach leads students to pay attention to the mistakes of the original language form, deepen their understanding of the rules of language structure, and form effective correct output.

2. A student-centred and teacher-led teaching environment is conducive to the enhancement of teaching effectiveness

The blended teaching mode based on SPOC includes online autonomous learning environment and offline entity classroom environment. In different environments, there are elements to promote deep learning and effective learning, which play an important role in improving the teaching effect.

First of all, the course platform provides a flexible way of learning. Online learning has changed the knowledge transfer path under the traditional teaching model and extended the space and time of knowledge learning. Students can flexibly choose the time, place and content of learning according to their personal circumstances. This model conforms to the online learning habits of students in the new era, facilitates them to realize generalized learning of course content, reduces anxiety and frustration in classroom learning, stimulates learning interest, and maintains long-term learning motivation.

Secondly, the curriculum provides students with a wealth of online learning resources to fully meet their learning needs. In the course learning resources, the teacher team not only produced grammar knowledge points to explain micro-classes, but also audio and video materials involving Japanese culture, society,

Vol.2 No.2 2021
https://doi.org/10.37420/j.cer.2021.015

economy, education and other fields, which helps students broaden their horizons and understand Japan from multiple angles. Give full play to the positive role of culture in language learning. Not only that, teachers also require students to share audiovisual resources on different topics in online discussion areas in small groups every week, explore knowledge from multiple perspectives through group collaboration, experience the joy of learning, enhance learning confidence, and enhance the sense of learning achievement.

Thirdly, contextual task-based language practice activities pose challenges to students' learning and help maintain learning motivation. The biggest difference between the language practice activities under the new and traditional teaching model is that it creates conditions for the transfer and application of students' language knowledge. At the same time, due to the high difficulty of the task, it is challenging for students, which also prompts them to more actively carry out independent learning and teamwork, which is objectively conducive to the maintenance of their learning motivation. In addition, in order to achieve common goals and practical tasks, team members usually communicate, analyze, evaluate, and reflect in the team to improve team collaboration and creativity.

Fourthly, the real-time feedback and learning statistics provided by the platform can help stimulate students' learning motivation. The Superstar Learning used in this experiment has complete real-time evaluation and learning statistics functions. Students can get scores and reports immediately after completing the pre-class test, so that they can find their own shortcomings. At the same time, students can also know their personal learning time, homework quality, practice rating, online discussion participation and other data in the personal learning files provided by Superstar platform, which is convenient for them to carry out personal summary and reflection against the data and stimulate their learning motivation.

Finally, online learning communities provide a platform for interaction between teachers and students and students, which helps to create a good learning atmosphere. Under the traditional teaching mode, there is less communication between teachers and students and between students. And in the new teaching mode, teachers and students can interact through online learning communities and discusses the issue of learning and sharing of learning resources and experience, the formation of the online community to learn new patterns (Li & Dai, 2016)—the students in order to achieve the language ability to ascend, the common objective of the motivation and guidance of teachers, to carry out autonomous learning and reflective practice. This new community learning mode creates a good and harmonious teacher-student communication atmosphere, activates the offline classroom atmosphere, reduces learning anxiety, and improves the teaching effect.

In summary, the new teaching model has innovated the way of curriculum learning and the interaction between teachers and students, provided rich learning resources and instant feedback on academic conditions, and at the same time brought challenges to students through contextual tasks. The optimization and innovation of the teaching environment meets the needs of students for learning and interaction, broadens their horizons, stimulates their motivation for learning, and brings about an overall improvement in the effectiveness of course teaching.

Conlusion

Japanese public elective courses serve as an important channel for non-major students in Chinese universities

to get started, broaden their horizons, and understand Japan. In recent years, there are still problems such as low class satisfaction and unsustainable learning motivation in Japanese language classes in China, which ultimately affects the improvement of Japanese language knowledge and ability. Based on the concept of blended teaching, this paper constructs a blended teaching model based on SPOC, and conducts a semester of experimental research in college Japanese elective courses. Data research results show that the new teaching model is significantly better than the traditional teaching model in terms of cultivating students' language application ability and improving teaching effects. The reason is that the result is inseparable from the teaching activities following the theory of second language acquisition and the environmental support provided by the teaching design. This research provides new ideas for solving the existing problems of Japanese public elective courses in colleges and universities, and also provides reference for the curriculum reform of foreign language elective courses, especially the zero-based foreign language elective courses. The influence of each element in the new teaching model on the teaching effect will be a future research topic and will be explored together with other scholars.

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Vol.2 No.2 2021
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