# The Influencing Factors of Online Learning--a Case Study of College English Course

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**ABSTRACT.** *During the COVID-19, online teaching has been the main teaching manner nationwide and worldwide. The present study aims to analyze the influencing factor of online learning, which is to realize by referring to the author's own experience and the relevant literature. It has found that the teaching subject, teaching environment, teaching resources, and teaching activities are the influencing factors and the keys to designing the syllabus.*

## 1. Introduction

To deal with the large-scale epidemic caused by the new coronavirus pneumonia, COVID-19,the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China issued a notice requiring online teaching, which emerged as an emergency during the epidemic prevention and control period. When talking about the online teaching, it should include four parts, which are quite comprehensive: teaching subjects, teaching environment, teaching resources, and teaching activities. The four parts are closely connected with each other to jointly support the online teaching ecosystem.

The implementation path of large-scale online teaching mainly includes the following strategies: first, to give full play to the advantages of multi-platforms, and build an online teaching environment. Second, to strengthen teaching guidance training, and enhance teachers' online teaching level. Third, to strengthen diverse teaching and research, improve online classroom quality and pay attention to online evaluation and research, and promote the development of the online teaching ecosystem. Fourth, to accurately grasp the connotation of learning and vigorously cultivate comprehensive talents individually and systematically.

For the present study, the author aims to summarize and reflect on the influencing factors of online learning, and what needs to be done to strengthen the whole process of online learning.

## 2. The Influencing Factors of Online Learning

### 2.1 Teaching Subjects

Students in the author's lectures of College English are sophomores, majoring in computer science, micro-electronics, artificial intelligence, electronics engineering, etc. None of them have passed the College English Test, band 4(CET4), and the average score of college entrance examination is around 90. They are active in class, but without the relatively high English proficiency and the motivation of achieving higher goals in English learning. For most of them, passing the final examination is the end of every semester.

Whereas, as the teacher, he or she has to put what he or she has learned about the theories about pedagogy and the professional knowledge into practice, which is the teaching practices and goals set for teaching. Students may lack motivation of learning, but that's just the what the teachers has to do, which is to motivate students to learn more and do better. Zhu Liancai has made a satisfaction survey about online learning among a large scale of students, which is mainly based upon students' experience in online learning. They found that students' overall satisfaction with online teaching is good, and the root cause of influencing students' satisfaction with online teaching lies in the difference between students' expectation and students' achievement of learning effect. The network platforms such as Catton are only the surface factors that are magnified when the online teaching process is limited by technical means and space-time distance. To improve students' online teaching satisfaction, the fundamental solution strategy is to create "effective classroom", which is to elaborate teaching design, give full play to school function, ensure the substantive equivalence of online teaching, and narrowing down the difference between students' learning expectations and learning experience[2].

Meanwhile, according to the statistics from the students' survey about self-evaluation and teaching suggestions from Dalian Neusoft University of Information, about 60.9% of students can preview the lectures occasionally, and around 56 % evaluate themselves as "relatively serious about online learning, and get distracted from the lectures or seminars occasionally". As for students' suggestions for online learning, the top concern is about the teaching platforms, which is around 64.86%, and the main complains are about the Internet congestion, software crackdown, etc. The detailed chart are listed below.
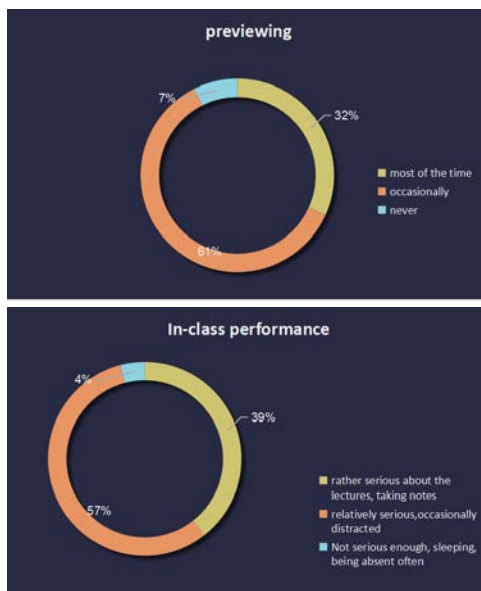
## 2.2 Teaching Environment

During the online teaching session, a lot has been changed, including the place, time, communication means, teaching method, feedback, etc. In the traditional classrooms, the teaching is carried out mainly through the lectures, the seminars, guest speakers, demonstrations. In online teaching, the pedagogical activities can be implemented by audio, such as Dingding, Zoom, and video chat, such as Dingding, Tencent Meeting, Ketangpai, Ichat, etc. Besides, the online teaching can also be done asynchronously, which means the teaching content and the whole teaching process can be recorded into audio and video streaming. Students can download the audio and video files to learn when appropriately. According to the authors' informal talks or chatting online with students, they can watch or listen to the files from time to time, and understand the teaching contents much deeper.

However, the intelligence and effectiveness of the learning platform needs to be further strengthened to provide students with personalized learning guidance, support for teachers' teaching decision-making, support for quality monitoring and evaluation which is based on big data.

## 2.3 Teaching Resources

To make the online teaching efficient and effective, the teaching resources are quite crucial. Resources like micro-lecture recordings including the vocabulary explanation, unit lead-in, passage lead-in, language points explanation, exercise explanation, language skills, have been built since four years ago in the author's

department. The resources are localized which have been designed by taking students' language proficiency, common queries about language learning, etc into consideration. The platform used for presenting these resources have also been built. Students can download the materials and do the Q&A with their peers and teachers. Course are planned out in advance, with syllabus, assignments, rubrics, examples of assignment, core readings and resources. Students can make the most of the flexibility of online course to work ahead as needed.

However, the process of building the teaching resources is quite time-consuming, and it is really hard to control the absolutely-high quality and the quantity of the resources at the same time. The overall arrangement is comprehensive and quite challenging. As of February 2, 2020, the Ministry of Education has organized 22 online course platforms to open free online courses for more than 24,000, covering 12 undergraduate disciplines and 18 vocational colleges. In the face of massive amounts of information, teachers must carefully screen online teaching resources, comprehensively consider the supporting role of the achievement of teaching goals, sort them, and orderly push them to better meet and guide the needs of students for independent learning. By utilizing the online resources, like the pre-recorded micro-lectures, students can work at their own pace and sequence activities according to their own needs and interests.

### 2.4 Teaching Activities

Teaching activities are indispensable for all sorts of education, since they are the crucial part of teaching. For online learning and teaching, the effectiveness of the teaching activities should be taken into consideration much more seriously. Whether the activities are effective in boosting and deepening students' engagements in the lectures and understanding of the theories or knowledge, are teachers' top priority, since it is quite hard to monitor students' behavior. Whether they are concentrating on the lecture or distracted will have an effect on the overall effectiveness of online learning. Therefore, the practical and suitable teaching activities are to be taken into consideration.

The teaching activities between face-to-face and online teaching are different. The teacher should not use one-size-fits-all model when designing the teaching activities, but take personalized learning (PL) activities based on PL principles into consideration. Personalized learning activities can support students' psychological need satisfaction and intrinsic motivation in an online course. To motivate students' engagement in lecture, and improve their sense of achievement, the author has organized activities to enhance their learning autonomy and competence.

First, the final score is composed of the daily performance(60%) and final exam(40%). By asking students to answer the random questions raised by the teacher can make them pay more attention to the lectures and gain the marks when getting the correct and related answers. Students are required to fill in the excel files to add marks for themselves.

Second, homework. Pigai.org, CET 4, etc. Students are required to take photos of

their homework and send them to the designated folder in the group. The in-group checkups and cross-group checkups are required to monitor student's learning outcome. Teachers are facilitators to facilitate the ongoing of all the teaching activities rather than the leader.

Third, quiz. Tests are arranged by utilizing the online platforms at the end of each unit. There are subjective and objective questions. The students will submit them at the designated time in class, and the lecturer will comment on the common errors to make students understand the language points better. The main content is the language points of the unit. These quizzes are also part of the daily performance score.

Fourth, preview and review. To make the online discussion among students and teacher running smoothly, for each lecture, the relevant previewing tasks are required. Students have to answer the designated questions raised by the teacher or the fellow students randomly and get the scores according to the preciseness and relevance to the questions. What needs to point out is that, the teacher should encourage and guide the students who are at the low level of language proficiency to make sure they are encouraged. Meanwhile, the unit reviews are assigned which are mainly focusing on summarizing vocabulary and language points, and students are required to upload the assignments according to time nodes by taking pictures of the assignments. The scores are also given by students within groups.

## 3. Suggestions and Thoughts about Online Teaching

By chatting with students randomly either online or offline, and by looking through the relevant literature and documents about online learning, the following part is to make some suggestions about online learning and teaching. It is both a challenge and an opportunity for teachers worldwide, since such a large scale of online teaching and learning needs has never been seen before.

### 3.1 To Motivate Learning Motivation and Concern for Learning Achievement

Comparing with face-to-face learning or the traditional learning, the top concern for teachers is how to mobilize students' learning motivation and ensure the learning outcome. A happy learning experience and sense of learning achievement is key to motivating students in learning. A steady and reliable learning platform or tool which is rarely influenced by the crackdown of software which can be a result of increasing of users is absolutely crucial as the fundamental basis. Students complain that the crackdown of the software or the unsteady of the Internet from time to time may make it hard to concentrate on the lectures.

The various, interactive and practical teaching activities are also indispensable to the success of online teaching. The online learning resources including the digital textbooks, syllabus, auto-grading systems, etc, are to be built systematically and timely. A smooth-running, and user-friendly learning platform is the key to motivating students.

### 3.2 To Make the Feedback Timely

Like traditional classrooms, students will encounter all kinds of problems in online learning, which requires teachers to answer questions in a timely manner to make sure students can get the feedback to ensure the learning outcome and effectiveness. Guiding and assisting students in a targeted manner, providing flexible and personalized learning support are the keys to ensuring learning effectiveness. In online teaching, students' learning behavior like whether they have logged into the system on time, finished the tasks timely, done the quizzes according to the time node, etc can be tracked and analyzed in time with the help of big data. The teachers' job can no longer be limited to grading or person-to-person explanation or error correction, since it is impractical online and time-consuming. The feedback like the score for each quiz or test, should be timely released publicly to evaluate students' learning status and encourage them to adjust the learning behaviors. The teacher provide students with after-class exercises, assignments, and learning resources.We must focus on method guidance and reflect the requirements of "low load and high efficiency"[1]. In online learning, teacher's role is to guide from afar, which can be realized by ideally intervening in discussions or commenting only as needed to reinforce, guide, and extend the discussion, and to make students be clear about their learning status and make adjustment whenever necessary.

### 3.3 Challenge for Teachers

Such a large-scale change of teaching manner can be a challenge for all the teachers, since it does not provide for preparation and adaptation. Teachers have to quickly adapt to the new forms of teaching, and be skillful at utilizing the online teaching methods, online tools, etc. They have to be watchful and patient at solving all the problems met by students either ones related with learning or Internet or technical support. Teacher also have to know the needs of students and how to create and facilitate online learning, having to grasp the online interpersonal skills to communicate effectively and supportively in writing like formal emails, letters, Q&A or chatting with students. To select and use online teaching tools appropriately and effectively are also key to enhancing student learning.

## 4. Conclusions

To learn is the intrinsic need for humans, and ideally it can not be affected by the change from the outside[3]. The online learning and teaching can be a challenge for students and teachers. Students' self-control over learning and ability in autonomous learning need teacher's guidance and support. For students, they need to adapt to the online learning quickly and to think deeper about learning with teacher's support. The combination and collaboration of online and offline learning may not be a short-time arrangement, more research like to strengthen the cooperation with online teaching platforms, the use of big data in efficiently evaluating students' assignments and quizzes,etc needs to be done systematically and timely. The new technologies

like cloud computing, artificial intelligence, mobile technology, etc are to influence the online teaching and learning further deeper.

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