

# The Design of Blended Learning Based on MOOC

## --- Taking the “Greek and Roman Mythology” as an example

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**Abstract.** Blended learning refers to the combination of online and onsite learning. With English major freshmen as subjects, this study attempts to design the blended course of “Greek and Roman Mythology” based on MOOC. Four aspects are involved in the design: online video making, onsite classroom teaching, online assignment and final assessment. The study also mentions the limitations of the blended teaching and learning. This study is expected to be useful in the research of blended courses based on MOOC.

### 1. Introduction

The concept of blended courses emerged at the beginning of this century. Although scholars have different definitions of it, most scholars agree that blended courses should be a mixture of onsite and online teaching and learning. However, in the first decade of this century, blended courses have not been carried out on a large scale in universities in China.

With the establishment of MOOC platforms “Coursera” and “edX” in American in 2012, abundant courses have been developed and provided to the world on Internet. 2012 is also known as the first year of MOOCs [1]. In China, at the same year, the Ministry of Education issued the “Ten-year Development Plan for Educational Informatization (2011-2020)”. With the rise and rapid prosperity of MOOCs, a wave of teaching reform based on information technology has been triggered. Many Chinese universities have participated in the construction and practice of MOOCs, and more and more online courses are available. Currently, there are more than 20 well-known platforms providing online courses such as Icourses, Zhihuishu, and XuetangX etc. There are as many as 1,291 national excellent courses on these platforms so far [2].

Online courses take full advantage of the convenience, mobility, sharing, and utilization of fragmented time to cater to the young people's learning habits. This approach is rebuilding the education system. But online courses are also criticized by scholars for the lack of interaction, delayed feedback, and low completion rate of students. Therefore, teachers would like to take the respective advantages of online and onsite learning when offering courses to students on campus, in order to achieve better teaching results. Based on the development of MOOCs, the design and practice of blended learning are becoming a research direction in higher education.

### 2. Literature review

Regarding the concept of blended courses, the definitions are as following. According to Bonk and Graham, blended learning is a learning system combining face-to-face teaching and computer-assisted teaching [3]. Stein and Graham stated that “blended” courses are a combination of onsite (i.e. face-to-face) with online experiences to produce effective, efficient, and flexible learning [4]. According to Auster, a blended course design can also be referred to as a hybrid or mixed modality course design as well as flipping the classroom [5].

Educational research suggests that blended courses are more effective compared to both face-to-face and online. A 2009 US Department of Education report examined fifty-one empirical studies

comparing online education with traditional face-to-face courses and concluded, “students who took all or part of their class online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course face-to-face”. The report also compared blended courses with fully online courses and found that instruction combining online and face-to-face elements had a larger advantage than purely online instruction [6].

In China, the blended teaching is also widely practiced. Feng Fei and Yu Qingqing studied 11 courses adopting flipped teaching mode in Peking University. They pointed out that flipped classroom should also be integrated with teaching design and activity design. The current teaching focuses more on resource construction but lacks activities design [7]. Wang Shengqing and Feng Xuesong conducted research on 27 blended courses offered by Peking University. They summarized the design and practice of these blended courses [8]. Yang Fang et al. launched a blended teaching practice of “Conversational English Skills” at Tsinghua University [9]. Suo Gefei and Chi Ruobing adopted a blended learning approach in the cross-cultural English course [10]. Yang Yonglin used blended teaching methods in the English writing course at Tsinghua University [11].

### **3. Design of blended course of Greek and Roman Mythology**

Greek and Roman Mythology is for first-year English majors at Beijing Jiaotong University. This course is different from the traditional language courses because it is a dual focused course, concentrating both on content and language. The design of the blended course will shift from language training to dual focus.

#### **3.1 Content of online video**

In the current MOOCs focusing on language skills, vocabulary and grammar points are still a major part of the video based on the purpose of language training. In the Greek and Roman Mythology, however, the language no longer plays the central role. The most important part is the ingesting of content and the improvement of cognition. Therefore, when it comes to the content of video, it is no longer necessary to make a video on language points. The video is to tell the myth in a clear and concise way with the help of pictures, clips from documentary and movies. And the length of the video has to be within ten minutes. As the preview, students will watch the video made by the teacher and do the pre-class exercises online.

The vocabulary list will be provided for students as a reference when they watch the video. It helps students better understand the video. The purpose is to integrate language learning into the process of content learning.

#### **3.2 Design of onsite teaching and learning**

Firstly, the teacher reviews the main points of the video content and checks the learning effect. Questions will be asked and students need to reply. In this process, they will adopt the language in the video to retell the story, which is a consolidation process of language ability.

Secondly, group report will be conducted in class. The students will do researches on mythological vocabulary and cultural notes online before class and then present a report in class on their own. This is to establish connection between language and culture. In this way, students can participate in the content construction of the course.

Thirdly, in the classroom, teacher will guide students to read essays and papers relevant to myths, to conduct group discussions, to analyze the connotations of myths, and to make literary or philosophical interpretations of myths. This part requires both high language and cognitive ability, therefore, it is guided by the teacher in the classroom. Students can help each other in class discussions, and teachers' targeted guidance helps students make greater progress.

#### **3.3 Design of after-class assignment**

At this stage, students use the language and knowledge they have mastered to challenge higher-level application of knowledge so as to form higher-level cognitive and speculative abilities. On the basis

of classroom discussions, students need to do the research on specific topics and write English papers on character analysis in the myth, cultural expansion, or cross-cultural comparisons to reflect their own critical thinking. The papers are submitted online where peer evaluation and teacher evaluation will be followed.

### **3.4 Assessment**

Assessment will be made in every stage of learning process, including pre-class exercises, group report, discussion involvement, and paper writing. Scores will be given based on the performance of the students. The overall score would be more comprehensive with the help of the various scores on each aspect.

## **4. Limitations**

Firstly, the production of videos and online instructions and assessment take far more time and energy than normal face-to-face teaching. It is a huge project to make a video from script writing, PPT designing, video recording, to video-editing. For teachers without information technology capabilities, it will be a huge challenge. Wang Shengqing conducted a survey in Peking University, and found that the workload of teachers has increased by 1.5 to 4 times the original face-to-face teaching. Students put in 1.5 to 3 times as much work as before [12]. Therefore, the problem is how to blend MOOC into teaching without increasing the workload of teachers and students.

Secondly, according to Stein, a blended course experience consists of activities and assessments that span the onsite and online environments. Because much of the learning time happens online, the online environment should consist of an intuitive navigation that immediately engages students in relevant, contextualized activities. [13] Therefore, if the university cannot provide a user-friendly online platform, it will be a time-consuming process.

Thirdly, more research and practice should be made on integrating online and onsite teaching and learning. And in each specific course, the way of blending would be different. Therefore, the proper way of designing blended course need further discussion.

## **5. Summary**

The increasingly important role of information technology in promoting education is an irreversible trend. This paper discusses the design of blended course of Greek and Roman Mythology from four aspects, online video making, onsite classroom teaching, online assignment and final assessment. It also mentions the limitations of blended course. The better integration of online and onsite teaching needs more exploration.

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