

## A Study on Student Satisfaction With An EFL Blended Course

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### Abstract

With increasing popularity of blended learning during and after COVID-19 crisis, students' learning experience in blended courses became an important issue worthy of our attention and study. Therefore the research is aimed at investigating students' satisfaction level towards a blended course *English Oral Expression and Communication*, which was developed to enhance students' oral expression ability. A course evaluation questionnaire was designed and employed to study the factors affecting students' satisfaction, and a focus group discussion was conducted to reveal in detail how these factors affected their learning experience.

**Keywords:** EFL blended course, oral expression communication, student satisfaction, course evaluation, China

### Introduction

Whether like it or not, it has to be admitted that the COVID-19 crisis has greatly accelerated the development and application of distant online and blended courses around the world, making it more important to study the effectiveness of the new learning formats. Besides students' learning outcome, student satisfaction is also one of the key factor to consider when developing a blended course. Astin (1993) defined student satisfaction in terms of student's perception towards his or her college or university experience, and perceived significance of the education that he or she received from an institution. Levy (2003) conducted research study with a sample of more than 200 students attending e-learning courses and stated that students'

satisfaction with e-learning is an important factor to measure the effectiveness of e-learning. Therefore students' satisfaction is one of the key indicators that can prove the effectiveness of the developed blended course *English Oral Expression and Communication* (hereafter referred to EOEC).

The Sloan Consortium in the United States defines student satisfaction as being successful in the learning and pleased with their experience, which focused on accomplishment and success in learning, and pleasure and enjoyment with the experience. Thurmond (2002) describe student satisfaction as a concept that reflects outcomes and reciprocity that occur between students and an instructor.

Wu, et al. (2010) conducted a study on students' satisfaction in a blended learning environment, in which satisfaction is defined as the sum of student feeling and attitude that results from aggregating all the benefits that a student hopes to receive from blended learning environment system. There are some researchers who dedicated to the research about factors contributing to student satisfaction in blended learning.

Bollinger and Martindale (2004) have identified three key factors central to student satisfaction: instructor, technology, and interactivity. Rahman, et al. (2015) claimed conducted an empirical study and prove that four factors affecting student satisfaction with a blended course, including ease of use, perceived value, learning climate and student-instructor interaction.

Dziuban, et al. (2007) found six key elements that contribute to students' satisfaction: an enriched learning environment, well-defined rules of engagements, instructor commitment, reduced ambiguity, an engaging environment, and reduced ambivalence about the value of the course.

Other factors, such as learning management system (LMS) features (Rubin, et al., 2013), course design and organization (Arbaugh, 2007), which also contribute toward students' satisfaction, are considered in this research. It needs to be clarified that student satisfaction in this case is just confined to the course level, not the institutional level.

Shea et al. (2003) analyzed 6088 samples in a survey, and found that there were three sub categories of teaching (instructional management, building understanding, and direct instruction) which are significantly related to student satisfaction.

Joo, et al. (2009) found that cognitive presence can predict students' satisfaction and has a significant impact on student' satisfaction. At the same time, these three kinds of presence have a great impact on students' learning persistence, in which teaching has a significant positive correlation with students' learning persistence. Johnson, et al. (2008) proved that there is a positive correlation between social presence and student satisfaction through research. Akyol, et al. (2009) found that the three kinds of presence the CoI theoretical frameworks are all related to perceived learning and student satisfaction.

Based on the previous research results on student satisfaction, this study investigated students' learning experience from six dimensions including technology, course design, interaction, assessment, instructor, and learning outcome. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the blended course EOEC in terms of student satisfaction, in the hope of shedding new light on successful blended course development. Two research questions were proposed:

1. What is students' satisfaction level to the six factors and to the blended course EOEC as a whole?
2. What is the effect of each factor on students' satisfaction?

## **Methodology**

### ***Population and Sample***

The course was designed targeting at non-English majors who take College English course as a compulsory subject. They are supposed to develop comprehensive English ability, one of which is language expression ability. There are about 3000 students enrolling each year in Shenyang University of Chemical Technology, where the research took place. After they learn English for three semesters, about 1000-1500 students will pass CET-4. The designed blended course *EOEC* are intended to offer for these students.

50 non-English major students in the 2nd academic year, who have completed College English course in the first three semesters and have passed CET-4 have volunteered to be the

sample to conduct the blended learning experiment. The reasons for choosing this group of students include several factors. First, that will guarantee the sufficient language knowledge needed to develop oral expression ability. Second, it is more reasonable and appropriate to set the teaching objective of cultivating students' oral expression ability at the last semester of College English learning (College students are required to take English courses for 4 semesters in mainland China). Besides, this objective is not only a cogitative decision based on the *Guide to College English Teaching*, but also very welcome by the students.

### **Research Instrument**

**Course Evaluation Questionnaire.** Based on the previous research results on student satisfaction and the need of answering the question in this research, the researcher develop the course evaluation questionnaire involving 21 domains and 6 dimensions, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Structure of the Course Evaluation Questionnaire for Students*

Dimension	Domain	Items
Technology	Accessibility	I1
	Quality of online materials	I2
	Ease to use	I3
Course design	Online course content	I4/I5
	Face-to-face learning tasks	I6/I7
	Integration of the two formats	I8
	Proportion of the two Formats	I9
	Difficulty	I10
Interaction	Interaction between students	I11/I12
	Interaction between student and teacher	I13/I14
Assessment	Clarity	I15
	Relevance	I16
	Effectiveness	I17
Instructor	Instruction	I18
	Feedback	I19
	Facilitator	I20
	Support	I21
Learning outcome	Knowledge and skill	I22

	Ability	I23/I24
	Confidence	I25
	Motivation	I26
Overall	Meet students' learning needs	I27
satisfaction	Recommending course to others	I28

The questionnaire is designed to investigate students' attitude and satisfaction with the blended course EOEC in order to learn the effect of the course on their learning experience. The questionnaire investigated how the students perceive the course in terms of technology (3 items), course design (6 items), interaction (4 items), assessment (3 items), instructor (4 items), learning outcome(5 items), and the overall satisfaction (2 items). Students were asked to respond to the statements provided in a five rating scale (from 1= totally disagree to 5 = totally agree).

To ensure content validity of the questionnaire, the draft was reviewed by three senior educators for comments. The educators checked for clarity, redundancy, and unity of each item in the questionnaire. Based on their recommendations, the initial draft was refined. In addition, the questionnaire has been assigned to 40 students in the pilot study and they were asked to provide their answers about whether the description in each item is clear for them or not. Items with which respondents found ambiguous in meaning were refined or removed from the questionnaire. All the items were rearranged in order randomly in the ready-to-use questionnaire to avoid leading students to a certain option unexpectedly. Alpha Reliability Coefficients has be calculated using SPSS 20.0 to see the internal consistency of items of the questionnaire to ensure the reliability. The Alpha Reliability Coefficients in the pilot study is 0.965, which shows that the items of the questionnaire are highly reliable.

**Focus Group Discussion.** From the Course Evaluation Questionnaire for students, we might know the general situation of student satisfaction about the course. However, a focus group discussion is a good way to understand the issue at a deeper level to verify their actual perceptions and also to provide more information in details. In the focus group, students were asked about their perceptions, opinions, and attitudes towards the blended course EOEC. Questions prepared in the questionnaire were asked in an informal group setting where participants were free to talk with other group members.

There are three types of questions in the questionnaire used in focus group discussion: one probe question that introducing participants to the discussion topic and make them feel more comfortable sharing their opinion with the group, and learning about their expectation about the course; 3 follow-up questions delving further into the discussion topic and the participants' opinions to know what they like or do not like about the course, and their experience after learning; one exit question to check to ensure that nothing missed.

### ***Data Collection***

In order to investigate the effect of EOEC on students' attitude and satisfaction to answer the research questions, Course Evaluation Questionnaire used by students collected quantitative data from the 50 students, in terms of technology, course design, interaction, assessment, instructor, learning outcome, and the overall satisfaction. In the last face-to-face class, the teacher sent the electronic questionnaire to the students, ask them to complete in class to ensure the recovery rate. The data helps to investigate the effects of EOEC on improving students' learning experience.

Moreover, a focus group discussion was conducted at the end of the semester to investigate students' perspective about the blended course EOEC in depth. After introduction, five questions were asked during the focus group discussion, which would last for about 60 minutes. The researcher who served as the moderator to guide the discussion and ensure that all participants were comfortable and engaged with the discussion, and that their opinions were being heard. A postgraduate student majors in Applied Linguistics in Shenyang University of Chemical Technology was invited to be an assistant who was responsible of recording the whole discussion and took notes of participants' nonverbal reactions during the focus group discussion .

Research sessions were recorded after asking permission from the participants. The recordings were used for analysis of the project and would not be used for any other purpose. The recording of the focus group discussion was transcribed as soon as it was completed, so the details of the research are not lost in the annals of time.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data collected from Course Evaluation Questionnaires used by students will be analyzed to report the average score of each of the six factors (i.e. technology , course design, interaction , assessment, instructor, learning outcome), which will indicate students' satisfaction level to each

of them, as well as overall satisfaction level. After that a multiple linear regression analysis was employed to build the structure model to reveal the contribution of each factor to the overall satisfaction level.

As for the qualitative data collected from Focus Group Discussion, the researcher will choose a directed content analysis approach to analyze them. After transcribing and reading through students' comments, the researcher will categorize the information in the data into minor and major categories of factors contributing to student satisfaction or influencing their attitude in the blended course. Then review all of the categories and ascertain whether some categories can be merged or if some need to be sub-categorized, finally identifying factors affecting students' learning experience in a holistic way. The analysis result from qualitative data will triangulate with the quantitative data obtained from the Course Evaluation Questionnaire to show the effects of the blended learning course on improving students' learning experience.

## Research Findings

### *Finding from Students' Evaluation with Questionnaire*

**Satisfaction Investigation Through Average Score.** Students were asked to respond to the statements provided in a five rating scale (from 1= totally disagree to 5 = totally agree) and got the corresponding points. For instance, if a student strongly agreed with item 1 "it is convenient for me to get access to the online course materials", he or she would choose "totally agree" and got 5 points, or got 3 points if he or she was not sure about that and choose "uncertain". The evaluation criteria of this study will be based on a range of score of 0.80. The formula of evaluation criteria is as following:

$$\text{Class interval} = \frac{\text{the highest width} - \text{the lowest width}}{\text{the width of class}} = \frac{5-1}{5} = 0.8$$

Therefore, the evaluation criteria of the satisfaction questionnaire is as following: the range value of 1.00-1.80 means the level of satisfaction in the dimension is "very low"; the range value of 1.81-2.60 means the level of satisfaction in the dimension is "low"; the range value of 2.61-3.40 means the level of satisfaction in the dimension is "moderate"; the range value of 3.41-4.20 means the level of satisfaction in the dimension is "high"; the range value of 4.21-5.00 means the level of satisfaction in the dimension is "very high".

According to the scores given by 50 participants through course evaluation questionnaire,

students' satisfaction level of 6 dimensions (technology, course design, interaction, assessment, instructor, and learning outcome) obtained from item 1 to 26, as well as their overall satisfaction level indicated directly by items 27 and 28 were all fell into the categories of high or very high. Among them, students' overall satisfaction level reached 4.42, which is very high according to the evaluation criteria. The average scores of the 6 dimensions ranging from the highest to the lowest were instructor (4.61), technology (4.33), interaction (4.33), assessment (4.19), course design (4.17), and learning outcome (4.14). Although the quantitative data could not tell which dimensions or factors contribute most to the deciding result of students' overall satisfaction level, it could still indicate that students have a positive attitude considering the effects of the blended course on improving their learning experience.

**Satisfaction Investigation Through Multiple Linear Regression.** In addition to calculating the average and percentage, in order to find the contributing factors of effective blended course with high level of student satisfaction, SPSS was also used to carry out multiple linear regression analysis to build the structure model, hoping to provide reference and implications for course development.

However, in the first round of multiple linear regression of seven variables, i.e. satisfaction level as independent and the other six independents as predictive factors, a collinearity was founded, which was probably because some of the independents were overlapped. Therefore, through factor analysis, "assessment" and "interaction" were combined into "course design", hence the five variables "course design(new)", "technology", "instructor", "learning outcome" and "satisfaction", with the first four are predictive factors and the last one is the dependent variable. At this point, a question was proposed: to what extent can "course design", "technology", "instructor", and "learning outcome" predict student satisfaction? A statistical prediction model is expected to be obtained through multiple linear regression like this:  $Y' = b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4$ .

To investigate the relationship between the dependent variable, student satisfaction, and the four predictor variables, the data were subjected to regression and correlation analysis. Table 2 presents the descriptive analysis result of the variables. The mean value of all the variables is greater than 4.0. The higher mean values of "Students' satisfaction", "Student-instructor interaction", "Instructor's performance", and "Course evaluation" indicate good practices of the blended course *EOEC*, which yield students satisfaction and effective

learning environment.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Variables*

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Satisfaction	4.4200	.6417	50
Technology	4.2242	.5156	50
Course Design	4.1360	.7154	50
Instructor	4.6050	.4659	50
Learning Outcome	4.3333	.5634	50

The correlation matrix shown in Table 3 clearly demonstrates that there is significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. From high to low, the correlation coefficients are "learning outcome" ( $r=0.669$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), followed by "course design" ( $r=0.647$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), "instructor" ( $r=0.566$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and "technology" ( $r=0.282$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The results reveal that "learning outcome" and "course design" positively and significantly influence the students' satisfaction, while the correlations between the two variables "instructor" and "technology" and student satisfaction are relatively weak.

**Table 3**

*Correlation Matrix of the Variables (n=50)*

Variables	Correlation Coefficients			
	1	2	3	4
DV Satisfaction	.282*	.647*	.566*	.669*
IV 1 Technology	—	.662*	.479*	.476*
2 Course Design		—	.699*	.664*
3 Instructor			—	.437*
4 Learning Outcome				—

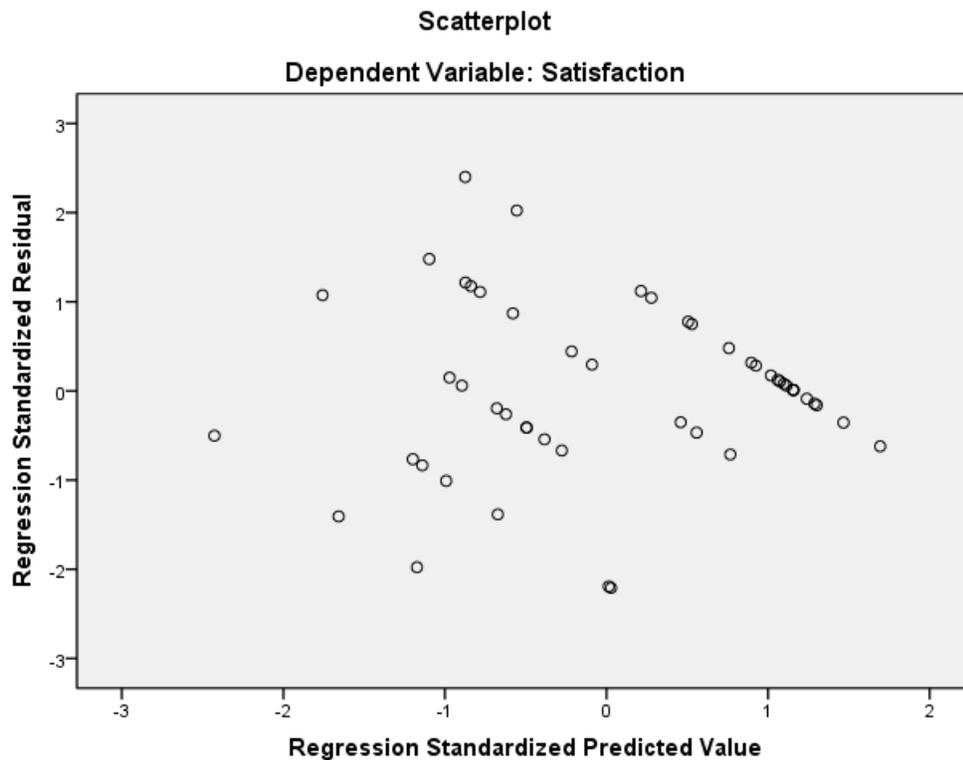
\* $p<0.05$

Afterwards, multiple linear regression was conducted to determine the best linear combination of technology, course design, instructor, learning outcome for predicting student satisfaction towards the blended course. Statistical assumptions, such as the normal distribution of residuals and non-linear correlation between predicted variables and residuals were all met in

the analysis (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Multiple Linear Regression: Standardized Predicted Value and Residual*



The means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients could be found in Table 2 and 3. The regression method of "enter" showed that the combination of the four independent variables significantly predicted student satisfaction towards blended learning in the course,  $F(4, 45) = 16.961, p < 0.05$ , with all of them significantly contributing to the prediction ( $p < 0.05$ ) except "instructor" ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 2). The beta weights, presented in Table 4, suggested that "learning outcome" and "course design" contribute most to predicting student satisfaction towards blended learning.

The smallest tolerance of the four independent variables is .289, which is much higher than 0.1; the maximum value of VIF is 3.462, which is lower than 5. According to the standard of tolerance and standard of VIF, it can be seen that there is no collinearity between independent variables. In addition, for a successful regression model, the estimated standard error should be

lower than the standard deviation of the dependent variable (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012). The standard error of this model is .423, which is lower than the standard deviation of student satisfaction .642, indicating that the fit of the regression model is good. The R square value was .601, which indicated that 60.1% of the variance in student satisfaction towards blended learning course was explained by the model. According to the standard of Cohen (1988), it is a large effect size. Therefore, the standardized regression formulation is student satisfaction =  $3.640 \times \text{learning outcome} + 2.048 \times \text{course design} + 1.951 \times \text{instructor} - 2.362 \times \text{technology}$ .

**Table 4**

*Multiple Linear Regression: Important Statistics (n=50)*

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted F R <sup>2</sup> (4, 45)	Beta	t (45)	Tolerance	VIF
DV Satisfaction	.775	.601	.566		16.961*		
IV Course Design							
New				.359	2.048*	.289	3.462
Learning Outcome				.460	3.640*	.555	1.800
Instructor				.257	1.951	.510	1.962
Technology				-.297	-2.362*	.559	1.790

\*p<0.05

### ***Finding from Students' Focus Group Discussion***

The recording of the focus group discussion has been transcribed as soon as it was completed. Each of the five questions has been answered by 50 students, hence 250 items of data, which has been identified by the order of the answers to each question, ranging from Q1I1, i.e. the first item of answer to the first question, to Q5I50, i.e. the last item of answer to the fifth question. A directed content analysis approach was adopted to analyze the data. After transcribing and reading through students' comments, the researcher has categorized the information in the data into seven major categories of factors contributing to students' satisfaction in the blended course.

First a code book was created based on the previous study of course evaluation and student satisfaction. The main categorization was based on the previous study on student satisfaction, including six main dimensions as used in the Course Evaluation Questionnaire, i.e.

technology, course design, interaction, assessment, instructor and learning outcome. However, in the process of data analyzing, another dimension has been observed and kept in the code book, which is overlooked by the researcher at the beginning of the study. Quite a number of students mentioned that they like the course because of the free and active atmosphere as well as the new friends that they can meet here, especially most of them were good at English. Therefore another domain “learning environment” was added to the main factors of affecting students’ satisfaction. After the creation of the code book draft, the researcher invited a colleague who has 15-year-experience as a college teacher and researcher to discuss about the codes and analyze the same data. After rounds of improvement, the final code book consists of 22 codes, including 14 theory-driven codes and 8 data-driven codes, which belong to 7 categories. After revision, the category list and definition presented in Table 5 was used as a tool to code the factors identified in the interview.

**Table 5**

*Categorization and Code of Focus Group Discussion Data*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Technology	QVL	Quality Video-lecture	of e.g., The audio quality of the some videos posted in Rain Classroom is not very good.(from Q3I40)
	CN	Convenience	e.g., Sometimes there is a problem with the software or the network in the online class. (from Q3I14)
Course Design	NTM	New Teaching Method	e.g., Also I do think that the regular English teaching is so boring that I need to have some risk.(from Q1I32)
	CA	Classroom Activity	e.g., The regular English teaching always focus on the books...This blend course mentioned [focused] more on the ability of speaking and encourage us to talk with others in English.(from Q2I7) e.g., I like English debate. This is very interesting experience. I also like discussing in our class. (from Q2I4)

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			e.g., The form of class discussion can be more diversified. (from Q5I43)
	OLC	Online Learning Content	e.g., I like the homework and online classes... The online class is interesting that everyone answers questions in English and practices our logical thinking ability. (from Q2I25)
	BD	Breadth and Depth of Learning Materials	e.g., I feel that the content of some units is a bit inconsistent with my personal ideas. As a sophomore, I'm still learning how to express my emotions and introduce my hobbies. It felt a bit like something I would be in high school. (from Q3I31)
Interaction	OOC	Opportunity of Oral Communication	e.g., In class, I can communicate with teachers and classmates in real time. Through group presentations, I can improve my oral English ability and exercise myself. (from Q2I9)
	TM	Teamwork	e.g., Teamwork and communication in class, which I think is the core of this class. Through our communication, I have learned a lot. It also makes this lesson lively and interesting. (from Q2I6)
	SP	Self-presentation	e.g., What I like most is that this course can let me have the opportunity to use English to study and communicate with the other people, and it has the more opportunities to show myself which is different from the English class before.(from Q2I11)
	F2F	Face-to-face time	e.g., We need to talk more with your surroundings face to face instead of chatting online...I think every of us should find a partner to accompany with your studying. It is truly important. (from Q4I34)
Assessment	HM	Higher Mark	e.g., Because I have past the CET 6 and I think

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	WL	Workload		that in this new course I can get higher points than my normal English course. (from Q1I43) e.g., Although there was no any handwriting homework, but the speaking and listening part are quite more than the normal courses. So it takes more time to learn English than the normal courses. It takes more time than I think. (from Q3I42)
	ET	Effectiveness		e.g., ...and some exercises do not seem to have a great effect on improving spoken English. (from Q3I44)
	CL	Clarity		e.g., I think there is a question type that is not very good...to find words in the text and fill in the blanks in an appropriate form. Sometimes my idea is different from the correct answer, but I personally think that the words I filled in also make sense. (from Q3I11)
Instructor	GS	Guidance and Support		e.g., Communicate with the teacher more, otherwise it is easy to be like our traditional model, and the practice will not be useful. (from Q4I19)
Learning Outcome	OEI	Oral English Improvement:		e.g., This course is very helpful to the improvement of personal oral English. I hope that everyone has the opportunity to participate in this course, speak more in class, and participate in group activities. (from Q4I49)
	CI	Confidence Increase		e.g., After all, oral English is an important part, and I may use it later when I work, and speaking well can make me confident. I think this class is good, so I signed up. (from Q1I10)
	MV	Motivation		e.g., This is the first time for me to learn English in this form in my life. Her novelty and free space greatly attract me and make me deeply interested in English, because compared

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			with traditional classes, there are more opportunities to speak and more topics to discuss. (from Q5I5)
	LI	Learn Independently	e.g., Finish their homework as soon as possible. Otherwise, when you remember to do your homework, the system won't allow you to submit it. (from Q4I1)
Learning Environment	FAA	Free or Active Atmosphere	e.g., We interacted a lot during class, and the atmosphere in the class was active, which helped me a lot. (from Q2I2)
	MNF	Meet New Friends	e.g., Now I am very grateful that I can enroll in this class. It has enabled me to learn a lot and also make new friends. (from Q2I35)
	OP	Outstanding Peers	e.g., Have the opportunity to meet other excellent students, learn together, and make progress together. (from Q2I38)

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Among the five questions asked in the focus group discussion, the most important and most directly related to the research question are Questions 2 and 3, which are used to respectively study which factors have a positive or negative impact on student satisfaction, and how much impact. Questions 1, 4 and 5 are used in hope that students will reveal their true thoughts and attitudes about the course, learning process and learning outcome when they talk about these topics. These are also very helpful for studying students' satisfaction with this course. In the students' conversations, the themes set in the research were mentioned 259 times. Among the 22 themes, the top ones mentioned most are oral English improvement (19.31%), opportunity of oral communication (17.76%), new teaching method (10.04%), motivation (6.18%), classroom activity (5.41%). As for the 7 categories, according to the frequency mentioned by the students, they are as follows in descending order: learning outcome (30.12%), interaction (27.41%), course design (21.24%), learning environment (8.11%), assessment (7.72%), technology (3.09%), and instructor (2.32%).

### Discussion of the Overall Findings

Generally speaking, among the six dimensions, the factor “instructor” got the highest satisfaction level as well as the highest average score. The items “The instructor presented the course content clearly” and “The instructor encouraged me to be active in communication and

discussion” were evaluated by students to be at the highest satisfaction level (the average score of 4.64), which indicated that the tasks of “direct instruction” and “facilitation of the course and activities” have been fulfilled. These two tasks were mentioned as two of the three core elements of “teaching presence” by Garrison (2000), with the other is “instructional design and organization of the course and activities”, which has been discussed and proved to be effective in the research in the previous section. The item “The instructor provided me effective guidance and feedback” also got a higher score, which may imply that “social presence” was created to some degree in the blended course, as supported by Aragon (2003), who proposed 12 different ways to establish social presence, including the combination of audio and video, posting instructions, and frequent feedback.

The other dimension with higher overall satisfaction is “interaction”. Under the guidance of interaction hypothesis, which is also one of the theoretical frameworks of this study, interaction is considered as a crucial element in this course to achieve the overall teaching objective of improving students’ oral expression ability. The items “I was provided many opportunities to interact with other students online or face-to-face” and “I was provided many opportunities to interact with the instructor online or face-to-face” were evaluated at a very high level of 4.48 and 4.32 respectively, which indicates that both the autonomous online component and face-to-face component in EOEC both provided enough opportunities for students to communicate with the teacher as well as with each other. The item “I think interaction with the instructor helped me achieve my learning goals” and “I think interaction with other students helped me complete the given tasks” got a very high level of 4.30 and high level of 4.20 relatively. It seems that the effectiveness of teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction were both recognized. In general, the data shows that the “interaction” part in the course has basically achieved satisfactory results.

Although the overall satisfaction level in the “technology” part is also very high at 4.33, there was obvious difference among them, with item “it is convenient for me to get access to the online course materials” got a very high level of 4.52 while item “The video-lectures online are clear and of good quality” got a level at 4.22. The item “Technical aspects of completing online learning were easy to manage” got a level at 4.26. The evaluation showed that the online learning tool Rain Classroom is rather satisfactory in terms of accessibility and ease to use, which is as expected due to its popularity in recent years. But the satisfaction level of the item about video-lecture quality was not as high as expected. In the following discussion session, the reason

had been found that because some of the video lectures were recorded outdoor with the original intention to provide a real language context, so the voice in the lecture, sometimes mixed with the sound of wind or surrounding noise, was not as clear as recorded indoors. This also reminds the stakeholder responsible to make online learning resources that except for the contents, the form of delivery including sound quality, picture quality and sound effects can also affect greatly on learners' learning experience.

The students' satisfaction level of "assessment" section ranks the fourth in all the six dimensions. Assessment is considered to be a crucial factor in a course, no matter it is online or blended course, or even a traditional one. But in the blended course EOEC the assessment methods were more complicated involving formative and summative methods, evaluating performance from both online and face-to-face formats. In this dimension, item 16 "The tasks or tests, etc. measured what I learned in this course" and item 17 "I think the assessment methods in this course were appropriate given the course aims" were evaluated at a very high level at 4.26 and 4.28 respectively. The high level of satisfaction indicated that the assessment methods were well-designed in terms of relevance and effectiveness, which may contribute to the high level of overall satisfaction of students, since the result of academic performance at the end of the semester could have a strong effect on students' learning experience, even learning motivation, which have been proved by the comments from focus group discussion. However, item 15 "I was clear about the assessment requirements for each assignment or task" was evaluated at an average score of 4.04, which is far below the overall satisfaction level. Students' doubt of clarity of assessment standards may come from the subjective question assessed by the teacher. At the beginning of the semester, assessment methods have been introduced in the orientation class, and students were told their subjective oral work would be assessed according to the amount of their oral output, and the relevance, accuracy, fluency and complexity of the oral output. But it seems this evaluation standard is considered fuzzy by some students, which also proposes ideas for subsequent course improvement and further research that oral work with subjective evaluation method need more detailed and clear evaluation standards.

In the "course design" dimension, the satisfaction level were all at a high or very high level as expected except for item 5 "The online quizzes in the course was very helpful to me" . Nearly all the quizzes in the online part come from the MOOC Conversational English Skills produced by Tsinghua University. These quizzes are usually given after a video to test whether the student has fully understand the content of conversation in the video. Compared with oral

questions like role play or group discussion, these listening comprehension quizzes are relatively boring for the students, and seem to have little to do with oral English training, which might be the reasons why some students considered them “not helpful”. However, according to the input hypothesis, large amount of comprehensible input is necessary for the language output, and that’s what practical teaching and learning experience have told us as well. Actually this result may indicate that students' recognition of a certain pedagogical concept will also indirectly affect the learning attitude and learning outcome finally. Therefore, the results of this study also show that it is necessary for English learners to have appropriate language learning theory training.

The overall satisfaction level of learning outcome is high at 4.14. Most students considered EOEC could improve their oral English expression and communication skills, as well as ability of learn independently and were satisfied with their learning outcome at a very high level, with average score of 4.28 and 4.22 respectively. In terms of the effectiveness of EOEC on interest increase and confidence increase in English learning, the satisfaction level, was high at 4.04, lower than the average score of all the items. The result indicates that more in-depth research may be needed in the field of improving interest and motivation of English learners in blended courses. Chapman (2019) tried to explore the reason of the effectiveness and claimed that the combination of activities and blended formats as well as a rich social environment would lead to an increase in interest and more positive stance toward English study. In this study, there may be two reasons behind the lower satisfaction level in these two items. First, the improvement of language, especially the improvement of oral skills, requires a long time of accumulation to have a significant effect, which in turn enhances learners’ interest and motivation. Second, the experiment lasted only 16 weeks, which might be too short to change a learner’s psychological factors.

## Conclusion

The research investigated in detail about factors affecting student satisfaction with the blended course EOEC. The research findings about student satisfaction level indicate that in an effective blended course each component of it should be designed in a way to create a strong and harmonious join force that can be embodied by cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. The research provided evidence that a well-developed blended course could improve students’ learning experience and provide practical reference for instructors and blended course developers.

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