# Recommendations for English-Speaking Course Design in Post-Pandemic Higher Education in Mainland China

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*Abstract:* The Covid-19 pandemic led to school closures and the shift to virtual classrooms in higher education globally. While China has managed to control the pandemic and resume face-to-face teaching, a blended approach to learning is crucial for future emergencies. This study explores the application of TESOL six principles in English language instruction for blended learning. The recommendations include online questionnaires, conducive learning environments, quality lessons, student progress monitoring, and fostering collaboration. Implementing these principles can effectively support student speaking course in higher education. Further research is needed to explore their implementation in different contexts and address challenges in English language education.

*Keywords:* Covid-19 Post-Pandemic Situation; Higher Education; TESOL Six Principles; Blended English-Speaking Course

## 1. Introduction

The 2019 Covid-19 epidemic caused global school closures and disrupted higher education (Rashid & Yadav, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Virtual classrooms became the preferred teaching option (Arora & Srinivasan, 2020). Although face-to-face teaching has resumed in Chinese universities, a blended approach remains important for future emergencies.

Spoken English courses in higher education aim to teach effective communication in English, focusing on listening, speaking, and effective communication in work and social settings (Wang, 2009). Online courses, as a pandemic precaution, reduce interpersonal contact (Weeden & Benjamin, 2020). To fulfill the primary goals, university English spoken courses should emphasize comprehensive learning, flexible methods, and interactive teaching, including effective interaction in digitalized teaching (Bernard et al., 2021). Further research is needed to explore productive interaction in a blended approach to teaching and learning.

The dedicated instructors contribute to improving education quality (Jia, 2019). Therefore, the success of blended teaching depends on instructors effectively utilizing internet-based instructional technologies, instructional actions, and pedagogical innovations. In this study, the author applies six principles of TESOL to offer suggestions for English speaking instruction after the pandemic, considering these factors.

## 2. Literature Review
## 2.1 The six principles of exemplary teaching in English teaching

The "Six Principles" framework provides guidelines for effective English teaching and learning. These principles encompass understanding students, creating inclusive environments, delivering high-quality lessons, adapting instruction, monitoring language development, and fostering teacher collaboration (TESOL, 2018). They also serve as benchmarks in adult education and career development, supporting language goals and cultural adaptation (Blok et al., 2020; Hellman et al., 2019; TESOL, 2018). Further research is needed to explore their implementation in different contexts.

## 2.2 The blending teaching in higher education

Blended learning combines face-to-face and online instruction, providing flexibility and supporting long-term education goals (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005; Míguez-Álvarez et al., 2022; Carla et al., 2020). It enhances the learning experience, improves accessibility, and benefits both teachers and students in higher education (Míguez-Álvarez et al., 2022). Instructors play a crucial role in integrating online technology, and blending can take different forms based on specific demands and settings (Lin & Wang, 2012; Alammary et al., 2014). Careful planning and customization are necessary for effective blending at various impact levels (Alammary et al., 2014). Exploring the implementation of blended English language education allows for leveraging the advantages of both online and face-to-face instruction (Míguez-Álvarez et al., 2022).

## 2.3 The English-speaking course in the mainland China

In oral English teaching, factors like fluency, pronunciation, interaction, turn-taking, and grammar impact instruction (Thornbury, 2011; Carter & McCarthy, 2017). The goal of English instruction in mainland China's higher education is to develop conversational and discussion skills (Higher Education Institution College English Teaching Advisory Committee, 2014). Challenges include exam emphasis, proficiency and confidence issues, and an unfavorable learning environment (Gan, 2013; H. S. Wang, 2013). English Medium Instruction (EMI) faces obstacles like low student confidence and language difficulties (British Council, 2020). Barriers to improving oral communication skills include vocabulary and grammar limitations, pronunciation, coherence, fluency, and lack of practice opportunities and resources (Xie, 2020). Seminar classes show promise as an innovative approach (Tian, 2014). This project aims to investigate and contextualize the teaching of spoken English in higher education.

## 3. Recommendations for Higher Education English-speaking Course Utilizing the Six TESOL Principles

The TESOL principles offer tailored language instruction (Candall & Sheppard, 2004). Blended learning is vital in higher education, involving teachers, learners, resources, and media. The author recommends applying these principles in unique circumstances, necessitating further investigation of blended learning.

## 3.1 Understanding Your Learners: Online Questionnaires and Placement Tests for Effective Teaching

Teachers should be aware of their students' level, needs, and interests (APA, 1993, 1997) to create a learner-centered environment.

To enhance classroom engagement, teachers should deeply understand students' cultural and educational backgrounds (British Council, 2013). Gathering information through online questionnaires and placement tests improves learning outcomes (Short et al., 2018). Collecting online feedback and providing timely support help understand students' needs and address challenges (Graham et al., 2000). Additionally, teachers should consider students' psychological state and offer appropriate assistance. Incorporating diverse communication modes in online assessments can engage students (Pape, 2010).

## 3.2 Cultivating a Supportive Learning Environment for Language Acquisition

The second TESOL principle emphasizes creating a comfortable learning environment (TESOL, 2018). Learner participation, self-worth, and autonomy are crucial (Boud, 1987; Hanrahan, 1998).

In online speaking courses, a stable learning environment requires flexible teaching materials and platforms. Sharing model dialogue and expression usage from the online resources, such as videos, support students' effective input. Encouraging group work and discussions with the familiar classmates fosters a safe learning environment. Using familiar interfaces like Tencent Conferences and Chaoxing Xuexitong Learning Platform reduces the learning curve for students. Designing teaching projects aligned with students' pace ensures a comfortable online classroom.

## 3.3 Crafting Dynamic Lessons and Flexible Instruction in Online Learning

The third TESOL principle emphasizes engaging classes and critical thinking (TESOL, 2018). In online courses, interactive lessons promote language development. Teachers can lead discussions on heated topics, ask thought-provoking questions, and observe student engagement through camera use online.

The fourth principle emphasizes ongoing assessment and adaptability. Adjusting teaching methods based on immediate student responses, such as accepting feedback via discussion forums during class intervals on the online platforms and regular online questionnaires (Long, 1985; Cazden, 1988).

## 3.4 Monitoring and Evaluating Language Proficiency in Online Education

The fifth TESOL principle focuses on tracking and assessing language learners' progress (Rea-Dickins, 2004). Teacher-based evaluation (TBA) involves teachers in planning, task development, and judgments (Davison & Leung, 2009). Online procedures can be used for various assessments (Becker et al., 2017). Teachers can conduct online examinations, gather information through questionnaires, use applets for language assessments, require students to upload their recording audios online and incorporate oral exams with language scenarios. Face-to-face instruction via platforms like WeChat or Tencent Meeting allows for demonstration, monitoring, and feedback provision.

## 3.5 Engage and collaborate within a community of practice

The sixth TESOL principle highlights teacher collaboration for support and professional learning (Moser & Brenner, 2021). Online teaching experience and knowledge of online language pedagogy are essential for effective instruction. Engaging in community learning using platforms like Twitter and Zongshi Yun facilitates communication, resource sharing, and professional growth (Wesely, 2013). Community networking platforms can be leveraged during potential epidemics to connect with colleagues, exchange insights on teaching methods and student development (Utomo et al., 2021).

# 4. Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused widespread school closures and disruptions to education globally (Utomo et al., 2021). Integrating offline and online teaching efficiently, with teachers playing a critical role, is crucial during emergencies (Utomo et al., 2021).

The six TESOL principles provide evidence-based guidelines for successful teaching in various formats, including second language speaking classrooms (Utomo et al., 2021). These principles focus on understanding students, creating conducive learning environments, designing high-quality programs, modifying implementation as needed, and monitoring language development (Utomo et al., 2021). Blended instruction has gained importance during the pandemic (Utomo et al., 2021).

While the paper lacks survey data and extensive literature review, it offers valuable insights for English education during the epidemic (Utomo et al., 2021). The author plans to continue exploring improvements in English teaching methods guided by the TESOL study (Utomo et al., 2021).

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