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## **A Blended Learning Design to Improve Non-Music Major Students' Knowledge of Chinese Traditional Music in Hunan Agriculture University**

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### **Abstract**

This study is a quasi-experiment research. The aims of the study are to determine if the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course using Superstar Learning Application improves the Chinese traditional music knowledge of non-music majors and to explore the students' opinions towards the use of Superstar Learning Application as a teaching and learning tool in a blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course. The research site is at Hunan Agriculture University, China, involving freshmen students taking the Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course. The study used a mixed methodology design. The Pre-test and post-test were administered to determine the effectiveness of the blended learning course. An in-depth interview was also conducted to explore the opinions of volunteer participants about the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course and the application used. Comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores showed that the Chinese traditional music knowledge of non-music major students improved after learning in the blended Chinese Traditional Music Course. Students who volunteered to be interviewed showed positive opinions towards the blended learning course and the Superstar Learning Application as a teaching and learning tool.

Keywords :blended learning, Chinese traditional music, superstar application, e-learning, music appreciation

### **Introduction**

The Chinese government gives immense importance to the inheritance of traditional culture. Recently, the General Office of the State Council in China issued the *Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving the Work of Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era*. It emphasizes that universities should set up public art course, which portrays the development of Chinese traditional culture and the education of art classics as the main contents. Given this mandate, universities in China have to teach Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course to Chinese college students; this is an effective way for Chinese students to inherit the Chinese culture.

For the past decades, teaching music in China has continuously been valued from primary school to college. Music appreciation courses have long been a staple in university courses. It is an important part of music curriculum. However, there are some deficiencies in current

teaching of music appreciation courses in universities, especially for non-music majors. There are two main reasons. One reason is the method of teaching and teachers. In traditional face to face classroom, teachers often overlook the teaching essence of music appreciation course. They only constantly offer some music information and outstanding classic works to students, but ignore the teaching process and reflection (Wu, 2019).

Another reason is the students. The music ability of most non-music majors is relatively low, and their learning time in the classroom is also inadequate. Therefore, it is not beneficial to the study of music knowledge (Liu, 2016). In addition, many young students do not realize the importance of learning Chinese traditional music as these students have been taught the course in a traditional classroom setting for many decades now, which makes students not interested in learning subject matters such as Chinese folk instrument, Chinese folk opera, and Chinese folk songs. Music Education is one domain that has traditionally taken place in a face-to-face mode (Ventura, 2013).

Improving students' ability to appreciate music is one of the important challenges of music education for non-music majors in China. This could be done by integrating technology in the teaching of music. Most literature on music education emphasizes the importance of using technology in teaching. With the development of technology, more and more technologies are integrated into music education. One such technology is the Superstar Learning Application; this is a Chinese educational application that provides many functions as video-sharing, teaching and learning resources, classroom interaction and teaching management protocols, and assessment tools. However, the usage of application in music education, especially in college music appreciation courses, has not been researched much yet. Therefore, the author designed a blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course which uses a learning application as a teaching tool and implemented the blended course to determine if there would be significant improvement in the music knowledge of non-music majors in terms of Chinese folk song, Chinese folk music dance, Chinese musical instrument, Chinese opera and modern Chinese music at Hunan Agriculture University, China.

### **Research Questions**

1. How effective is the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course in improving the Chinese traditional music knowledge of non-music majors in terms of Chinese folk song, Chinese folk music dance, Chinese musical instrument, Chinese opera and modern Chinese music?
2. What are the opinions of non-music majors towards the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course and the use of Superstar Learning Application as a teaching and learning tool?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To determine the effectiveness of the blended Chinese traditional Music Appreciation Course in improving the Chinese traditional music knowledge of non-music majors in terms of Chinese folk song, Chinese folk music dance, Chinese musical instrument, Chinese opera and modern Chinese music

2. To explore the opinions of non-music majors towards the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course and the use of Superstar Learning Application as a teaching and learning tool.

### **Significance of the Study**

The Chinese government emphasizes the teaching of traditional culture. The document about the implementation program for patriotism education in the new era in China was published in November 2019. One of them mentioned that Chinese people must enhance the sense of belonging, identity, dignity and honor of the Chinese nation by inheriting the excellent traditional Chinese culture. The course of Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation is an effective way for students to inherit the Chinese culture and enhance national confidence, thus, if this study proves that the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course is effective in enriching the knowledge of students about the traditional Chinese culture, results will be beneficial for the Chinese government's effort to promote patriotism through music. Not only the study will be beneficial for music education, but will also be beneficial for other subjects aimed at enriching the Chinese culture.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review supporting this study comprises 1) blended learning 2) Chinese music teaching, and 3) Superstar Application.

### **Blended Learning**

Blended learning has been around for quite some time and has been used and tested by teachers as a new form of teaching. Many courses and teachers have adapted this methodology to bring about changes in the teaching and learning of concepts, skills, and theories, and music education is no exception.

The conception of blended learning has been fuelled by advances in technology with the development of technology-based education such as computer-based education, distance education and on-line learning. In addition, the proliferation of smart devices, the wider use of the internet and the decreasing cost of technology have redefined the teaching and learning process in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These emerging technologies and the growth of online learning have given rise to the so-called blended learning which is sometimes referred to as hybrid or mixed mode learning because it merges online technologies and face-to-face teaching. These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, but blended learning is most commonly used. Blended learning is a flexible term, used to describe any and all varieties of teaching where there is integration of both face-to-face and online delivery methods (Partridge, Ponting, & McCay, 2011). Debate on its meaning is still ongoing. Attempts to define the term abound in literature. These include: "blended learning" that combines face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning and reduced classroom contact hours (reduced seat time) (Dziuban, Hartman, & Moskal, 2004, p. 2, cited in Partridge, Ponting, & McCay, 2011). "Blended learning is the thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences. The basic principle is that face-to-face oral communication and online written communication are

optimally integrated such that the strengths of each are blended into a unique learning experience congruent with the context and intended educational purpose” (Garrison and Vaughan, 2008, p. 5, cited in Partridge, Ponting, & McCay, 2011)). Allen and Seaman (2007) defined blended learning as a version of online learning wherein 30%-79% of the course content is delivered online. Some researchers assigned half of all the class time to face-to-face and half to online learning (Bernard, Borokhovski, Schmid, Tamim, & Abrami, 2014, cited in Skrypnik, et al, 2015 ). Although some scholars present the definition of blended learning from different emphasis, they all agreed that blended teaching has outstanding advantages for students (Garrison and Vaughan, 2013; Strayer, 2012; Picciano, 2006). Other scholars further found that blended teaching can combine the best features of classroom-based teaching and online learning in improving students’ learning experience and providing flexibility for students’ learning (Garrison and Vaughan, 2013). However blended learning is defined, any instructor who integrates technology with face-to-face teaching could be said as employing a blended instruction.

### ***Blended Learning in Academic Disciplines***

Blended learning has been utilized in teaching courses in many disciplines. Research on blended learning has been conducted in the fields of education, engineering, music education, medicine, health, management and commerce, society and culture to name a few. However, since each academic discipline has different learning objectives, the approach to blended learning is also different. Critical to curriculum development in these disciplines is the concept that the academic goals and objectives drive the pedagogical approaches and technologies used. The approach taken depends on how teachers and students use technology in conjunction with student learning styles (Partridge, Ponting, & McCay, 2011).

### ***Learning Applications Used in Blended Learning Classroom***

There are numerous learning applications that can be used in a blended learning classroom. Some are free and some are paid-subscriptions. Educational technology such as apps can help students with time management, organization skills, homework, collaboration and more. The functions of these learning applications differ and are limited to a certain extent. With any application, it is not a one size fits-all. The choice of learning application depends on the purpose of the users. In western countries, there are many learning application tools available for students such as Blackboard Application, Duolingo, Canvas Student, Quizlet and many more. Each has its own features and functions (Moody, 2020).

**Blackboard Application:** The mobile app allows students to access coursework for on-line or in-person classes with virtual components. Students can view course content, complete assignments and tests, view grades and more.

**Duolingo:** It considers itself as "the world's best way to learn a language. Duolingo offers lessons in 35-plus languages, helping users with speaking, reading, listening, writing, grammar and vocabulary. Duolingo offers both free and paid versions, the latter with an ad-free experience and offline access to lessons. Additionally, Duolingo has emerged as a test of English proficiency accepted at some U.S. colleges.

**Canvas Student:** Similar to Blackboard, students can access coursework, submit assignments and view grades with Canvas Student.

**Quizlet:** Another flashcard app, Quizlet allows users to create their own decks, which can be shared with other users, as well as the ability to play time-based games to help students with memorization.

These applications have some similar features and functions as that of the Superstar Learning Application but the features and functions of the Superstar Learning Application are more extensive. Comparing the functions and features of Superstar Learning Application with other learning applications used by students in the west, the following are observed:

**Table 1**

*Similarities and Differences of Western Learning Applicationa and Superstar Learning Application*

Similarities	Differences
Access coursework, submit assignments, complete tests and view grades	Interactive teaching through the platform
Upload course materials	Self-tests in many forms available anytime
Class attendance monitoring	Re-test is available
	Three stages of teaching
	Powerful data storage
	On-line and off-line teaching
	Before, during or after class, interactive teaching activities such as sign-in, test, selection, questionnaire, voting, supervision, feedback and evaluation can be carried out immediately.
Pre-view teaching contents	Preview teaching contents

## Chinese Music Teaching

Teaching music in China has always been traditional, where music teachers give lectures about music history, presents audio tapes of songs and students listen. Formal music instruction begins at an early age. Routine music activities include singing, dancing, clapping, moving and playing musical instruments done either individually or in groups but group learning is preferred (Reimer, 1989). However, singing occupies most of classroom teaching with body movements integrated into the songs (Brahmstedt & Brahmstedt, 1997). Music listening is seen as the best method for first lessons on pitch, tone color, rhythm, melody and harmony. Chinese music is usually recommended when teaching listening lessons in schools; however, most of the listening lessons used by teachers are based on western musical styles (Ho & Law, 2004). Chinese textbook music series which combine traditional Chinese folk songs and traditional western music are used by schools.

### *Reasons for Teaching Music*

In October 2020, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council General Office released documents regarding cultivating aesthetic values in students of higher education by including classic art education as the main content of public art courses. Chinese traditional music appreciation course is one of these public art

courses which could cultivate and preserve Chinese traditional culture. The documents also mentioned that classic art education which includes music could be the means to guide students to establish correct view of history and view of traditional culture, revolutionary culture, socialist culture as well as to strengthen love for the country. Music also serves as a means of communicating ideologies from the government (Ho & Law, 2009).

Music is highly valued by the Chinese society today. At present, music education in China serves many purposes, mostly having to do with developing desirable traits in Chinese youth in terms of ethics, values, and character traits. Ho & Law (2004) state that Chinese authorities use music instruction as a cultural tool for teaching and preserving national identities. Music education in China today integrates music, arts, dance, and drama and links these arts with emotions, culture, science, and life as a whole (Ho & Law, 2009).

As stated earlier, teaching music in China has always been traditional. However, recently music teachers have tried integrating technology in teaching music with the traditional face-to-face instruction.

Teaching music in a traditional way and in blended learning mode has some differences. Table 2 outlines some of them.

**Table 2**

*Comparison of Traditional and Blended Learning Mode Using Superstar Learning Application for Teaching Music*

	Traditional Teaching and Learning	Blended Teaching and Learning
Pre-class	<p><b>Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assign preview contents in the textbook</li> </ul> <p><b>Students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-finish preview contents in the textbook</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-publish self-study resource and assign self-study tasks through Superstar learning application</li> </ul> <p><b>Students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-study self-study resource and finish self-study tasks through Superstar learning application</li> </ul>
In-class	<p><b>Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-lecture on definition, history, categories , artistic features of one type of traditional music</li> <li>-assign cooperative learning task</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-solve the difficult problems encountered in the preview</li> <li>-assign in-class quiz through Superstar learning application</li> <li>-assign cooperative learning task</li> </ul>

	<b>Students</b>	<b>Students</b>
	-study the definition, history, categories, artistic features of one type of traditional music taught -finish cooperative learning task	-listen to the explanation of the difficult problems encountered in the preview -finish in-class quiz through Superstar learning application -finish cooperative learning task
After-class	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
	-assign and correct homework	-assign and correct homework through Superstar application
	<b>Students</b>	<b>Students</b>
	-finish homework	-finish homework through Superstar application

### **Superstar Learning Application**

Superstar Learning Application is a platform for course learning, knowledge dissemination and management sharing based on micro-service architecture. It makes use of the vast amount of books, periodicals, videos and other resources accumulated by Superstar in the past 20 years, and integrates knowledge management, course learning and other applications to provide learners with a one-stop learning and working environment. Students can use Superstar Learning platform to independently complete book resources query, electronic resources search, course learning and group discussion. The platform has a wealth of Chinese and foreign literature and information resources to provide convenient services for students (Cao, Ma, & Gong, 2018, cited in Zhao, et al, 2019). In course learning, the application has the functions of setting teaching task points, checking in, discussing, and testing. Teachers can use the platform to flip classroom teaching and record real-time teaching process and related activities (Shi, He, & Xie, 2018, cited in Zhao, et al, 2019).

As a mobile teaching assistant APP, Superstar Learning Application refers to the mobile intelligent devices represented by smart phones that can be used to carry out real-time interactions in and out of class in the mobile network environment. Since 2015, it has been widely used in teaching as a teaching assistant tool (Zhang, 2019).

#### ***Features of Superstar learning application:***

- (1) Suitable for diversified mobile services

Whether it is IOS, Android, or different versions of IOS and Android mobile devices, even on PC, Superstar Learning Application can be used at any time (Yu, 2020).

(2) Powerful functions

Teachers can manage their own classes and students, send notice, upload and share course information, learning requirements, courseware, micro-lessons and other learning resources. They can assign and check homework, organize group discussion, do answer-question game, take tests, vote, etc. ( Miao, 2019).

(3) Real-time interactive activities

No matter it is before, during or after class, interactive teaching activities such as signing-in, taking test, answering questionnaire, voting, giving supervision and feedback and evaluation can be carried out immediately (Zhang, 2019).

(4) Promote students' independent learning

Students can immediately receive the course information, learning requirements, courseware, micro-lessons and other learning resources uploaded by teachers. They can preview and review them at any time according to their own learning situation (Miao, 2019)..

(5) Study follow-up and evaluation

After the project contents have been selected and designed by teachers, they are uploaded to the platform. Teachers can follow up and evaluate students' learning progress anytime and anywhere, which is a part of supervision and communication. At the end of the semester, teachers can also get learning data of each student through the platform (Miao, 2019).

(6) Provide large amount of learning resources

This application provides massive learning resources, which could further broaden the horizon of learners.

Both on-line and off-line teaching could be done on this learning platform consisting of four stages: pre-class, in-class, after-class and course assessment (Zhen, 2019):

**Pre-class**

The pre-class stage includes preparing the teaching contents according to the syllabus. The teacher decides which knowledge or content should be taught in-class and which knowledge or content should be uploaded in the superstar application. Courseware, video, question bank and other forms of teaching resources are prepared according to the contents of the course, network resources related to the contents are collected, and the resources are published on the superstar learning platform for students to download and learn.

The teaching video corresponds to the textbook, which is convenient for students to master the basic contents of the course. The question bank is mainly used for students' self-test. Therefore, the setting of questions should be of appropriate characteristics and moderate difficulty (Zhen, 2019). The self-tests mostly test knowledge of the course contents and are in the form of objective questions such as multiple-choice questions and fill-in-the-blank questions for students to assess their understanding of the knowledge specified in the syllabus through the self-test results. Before class, these teaching resources will be uploaded to the learning platform through the computer or mobile phone, and preview notice will be released on the platform. Students can preview and do the test at any time and anywhere.

**In-class**

Interactive teaching is adopted in the class. The platform provides a variety of check-in methods such as gesture, location, QR code, etc., which can check the attendance in real time.

In the process of teaching, the platform can be used to interact with students by selecting students and having them answer questions in the platform, so as to enhance students' participation in class. Students' answers will be graded as one of the bases of process evaluation.

#### **After Class**

The teacher assigns homework through the platform. The teacher can monitor which students fail to submit in time. Teachers can use mobile phones and computers for homework review. Self-test subjective questions, such as multiple choice questions, filling in the blanks questions, and judgment questions are scored automatically by the system. Students who do poorly in the test could redo the test. This function of the Superstar helps students to check their knowledge of a content in time while teachers could monitor students' understanding of the course contents and offer remedial solutions.

#### **Course Assessment**

Relying on the powerful data storage and analysis function of superstar application, all classroom teaching data can be completely recorded and generated into a classroom report, which provides a strong basis for student evaluation (Zhen, 2019). Teachers can view the detailed participation of students in any activity in real time and make data statistics. For the evaluation criteria, teachers can freely set weights, and can share the results with students in a timely manner. Since the assessment covers not only knowledge acquisition but also students' practical and innovative abilities, the evaluation helps direct students to proper learning.

### **Methodology**

This study used a mixed-method design. A detailed explanation of the scope of methodology, population, sampling, and data analysis are described below.

#### **Scope of Design**

This section comprises part I and part II.

#### ***Part I: Needs Assessment and Quasi-experiment.***

**Needs Assessment:** Before conducting the quasi-experiment, the author designed the course. A needs assessment was done to determine the contents of the course and teaching methods. The needs assessment data and data from the literature review were used to design the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation course.

**Quasi-experiment:** The aim is to determine the effectiveness of the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation course. Before the experiment commenced, students participating in the study were given a briefing about the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation course. After the briefing, they were given the pre-test. The pre-test included questions about Chinese folk song, Chinese folk music dance, Chinese musical instrument, Chinese opera and modern Chinese music.

After the implementation of the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation course, which lasted for eight weeks, a post-test which included questions about Chinese folk song,

Chinese folk music dance, Chinese musical instrument, Chinese opera and modern Chinese music was given to the same students to determine if there was improvement in their scores.

### ***Part II: In-depth interview***

The aim is to explore the students' opinions on the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course using Superstar Learning Application.

### **Scope of the Population and Sample**

The total population in this study was 400 non-music majors at Hunan Agriculture University while the actual sample was forty college freshmen, non-music majors, from two classes who were selected purposively and taught by the author.

### **Scope of Research Instrument**

#### ***Quantitative Part***

Pre-test and post-test were administered through the Superstar Learning Application before and after students learned in the blended learning course using the Superstar Application to determine if there would be significant improvement in the Chinese traditional music knowledge of the students.

#### ***Qualitative Part***

An interview was conducted with 10 volunteer students to determine their opinions about the blended course and the use of Superstar Learning Application in teaching and learning. According to Creswell (2014), the minimum size for the interview for phenomenological qualitative data ranges from 8 to 30 persons. The author asked the volunteers to sign the consent forms to ensure confidentiality and personal information protection. The interview questions were validated by 3 music teachers.

There were four questions asked to volunteer students regarding their learning experiences of the blended course.

Q1. What features of the Superstar Learning Application do you like and made you understand more the course? Why and how?

Q2. Do you think using Superstar Learning Application in the blended Chinese traditional music appreciation course made you understand more about the Chinese traditional music? If yes, how? In what aspect/way?

Q3. Would you like blended learning in Chinese traditional music appreciation course? Why or why not?

Q4. What have you learned throughout the course that most interest you and enjoyed most? Why?

#### **Validity of the Interview Questions**

The validity of the interview questions was done by three experts. Each interview question was rated between 3-4, with a corresponding I-CVI of 1.0, and the S-CVI of 1.0. The evaluation result shows that the questions have reliable content validity as shown in table 3.

**Table 3**

*Results of the Validation of In-Depth Interview Questions by 3 Experts*

Item	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Number of Universal agreement	I-CVI
1	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	1.00
2	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	1.00
3	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	1.00
4	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	1.00
5	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	1.00
6	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	1.00
Ave. I-CVI = 1.00					

Yes: expert rating as "suitable" (3 or 4)

No: expert rating as "not suitable" (1 or 2)

S-CVI/UA:  $6/6 = 1.00$

All the items were rated "suitable" (3 or 4) by the 3 experts. Scale Content Validity Universal Agreement(S-CVI/UA) was 1.00 while the I-CVI/Ave yielded a value of 1.00 as well.

### Scope of Data Analysis

The data analysis comprises analysis of two sets of data: quantitative and qualitative.

**Quantitative Data:** The pre-test and post-test scores of the students were compared and analyzed using a paired t-test to determine if there was significant improvement in students' Chinese traditional music knowledge before and after learning in the blended Chinese Traditional Music course.

**Qualitative Data:** The interview data were analyzed using content analysis to explore and synthesize different themes of students' opinions regarding their learning experiences in the blended course and the Superstar Learning Application as a teaching and learning tool.

## Results

### Quantitative Results

The hypotheses are:

Ho: There is no improvement in students' knowledge about Chinese traditional music in terms of Chinese folk song, Chinese folk music dance, Chinese musical instrument, Chinese opera and modern Chinese music before and after learning in the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course using Superstar Learning Application.

Ha: There is an improvement in students' knowledge about Chinese traditional music in terms of Chinese folk song, Chinese folk music dance, Chinese musical instrument, Chinese opera and modern Chinese music before and after learning in the blended Chinese Traditional

### Music Appreciation Course using the Superstar Learning Application.

Table 4 showed a significant difference in the scores of Class 1 students' pre-test scores and post-test scores,  $t(19) = -15.745$ ,  $p = .000$ .

**Table 4**

*Paired Sample t-test of Pre-test and Post-test scores of Class 1*

	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Paired Sample t-test Scores	20	-31.350	8.905	-15.745	19	.000

For class 2, the results of paired t-test in Table 5 also show a significant difference in the scores of students' pre and post-test scores;  $t(19) = -19.940$ ,  $p = .000$ .

**Table 5**

*Paired Sample t-test of Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Class 2*

	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Paired Sample t-test Scores	20	-41.900	9.397	-19.940	19	.000

Results of the paired sample t-test indicate that there was an improvement in the knowledge of students about Chinese Traditional Music in terms of Chinese folk song, Chinese folk music dance, Chinese musical instrument, Chinese opera and modern Chinese music before and after learning in the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Course using Superstar Learning Application, which implies that the blended Chinese traditional music course is successful in improving the Chinese traditional music knowledge of students based on the statistical results. The major advantage of blended learning is that it offers more independent and constructive learning (Ruokonena & Ruismäkia, 2016).

### Qualitative Results

The interview was conducted a week before the post-test was administered to determine the non-music majors' opinions towards the blended course and the Superstar Learning Application as a teaching and learning tool. The interview results indicate a positive opinion about the blended course and the learning application used.

Results of the interview based on the interview questions 1 and 2 are shown in tables 6 and 7 respectively.

**Interview Question 1:** What features of the Superstar Learning Application do you like and made you understand more the course? Why and how?

**Table 6**

*Responses to Interview Question 1*

Functions	Specific function	Number of interviewees
Interaction	Topic discussion and group tasks	8
	Sign-in	7
	Voting and answering	7
Learning effect detection	Pre-class testing	5
	After-class testing	6
	In-class quiz	6
Recording and collection	Cloud storage	4
	Noting	5
	Collection	3

The above table shows that there are three categories of functions favored by interviewees in Superstar Learning Application. Firstly, students like the interactive function in Superstar Learning Application which include topic discussion, group task, sign-in, voting and answering. Secondly, students favor the function of detecting the learning effect, which includes pre-class testing, after-class testing and in-class quiz. Thirdly, students like the recording and collection function, including cloud storage and noting.

**Interview Question 2:** Do you think using Superstar Learning Application in the blended Chinese traditional music appreciation course made you understand more about the Chinese traditional music? If yes, how? In what aspect/way?

**Table 7***Responses to Interview Question 2*

Name	Aspect/way to understand more about the Chinese traditional music			
	Students learn preview videos through Superstar APP	Students learn music appreciation in situational teaching.	Students take the after-class quizzes through Superstar APP	Students browse related video, audio, text and other materials through Superstar APP
Student1	√	√	√	√
Student2	√	√		√
Student3		√		
Student4	√		√	
Student5		√	√	
Student6	√	√		
Student7	√	√	√	
Student8	√			
Student9	√	√	√	
Student10	√	√		√

**Interview Question 3:** Would you like blended learning in Chinese traditional music appreciation course? Why or why not?

All the interviewees expressed that they like blended learning in Chinese traditional music appreciation course. They believed that blended learning has three main characteristics that are beneficial to the learning of Chinese traditional music appreciation course: could watch videos related to the course anytime, anywhere; immediate feedback of their work; and diversified assessment methods which are fair.

Five interviewees agreed that the most recognized advantage of blended learning is meeting the needs of diversified learning styles. Students could study independently or collectively, and could study in class or online. The interviewees had the autonomy to choose the time and place of online learning and activities beneficial to them so as to achieve better learning results. This is supported by the study done by Ariyawong and Phongsatha (2017) about self-designed learning activities that influenced the students' learning achievement. Results of their study showed that the level of knowledge of students improved after the implementation of the self-designed learning activities. This is due to a more personalized learning that increased students' interest, motivation and collaboration with other students.

Three interviewees agreed with the diversified assessment methods of blended learning. They mentioned that the examination method in the traditional class teaching was unitary. The end-of-term test would occupy most of the final assessment. Therefore, although some students worked very hard in class and finished their homework with good quality and

quantity, if they failed at the end-of-term test, their final assessment results would also be unsatisfactory. However, multi-dimensional assessment method was used in blended learning. Online grades in all links, such as course videos, chapter quizzes, interviews, discussions, and check-in were all converted into a percentage of the final assessment score. This enabled interviewees to gain a sense of achievement from more learning links and enhanced their motivation and confidence in learning.

The other 2 interviewees expressed that blended learning could meet the needs of different types of learners. One interviewee said he prefers Guqin, a folk instrument in traditional Chinese music, while his classmate prefers Chinese opera. In the process of blended learning, besides course video and lectures, they could also learn Guqin and Chinese opera by searching text, video and audio data on Superstar Learning Application. The blended learning could meet their different needs, and further improve their ability of music aesthetics.

**Interview Question 4:** What have you learned throughout the course that most interest you and enjoyed most? Why?

According to the analysis of the interview results, it was found that folk songs were the contents that most interviewees were interested in and like most. Six interviewees expressed their interest in and love for folk songs from different perspectives. Some interviewees showed their special love for folk songs, especially when appreciating the folk songs of their hometown because they are familiar with the local conditions and traditional customs of their hometown, and could feel the charm of the folk songs deeply. They are also proud of the folk songs in their hometown that could be passed down to young people today. Some interviewees expressed their preference for the work songs in folk song because the work songs are usually sung in the way of a chorus, which is quite unique and makes people feel majestic. Some interviewees preferred the minor tune in folk songs. They thought that the minor tune absorbs the characteristics of work songs and folk songs, and has been further optimized, with smooth, soft, and delicate artistic characteristics. Some representative works in the minor tunes, such as Jasmine Flower and Flying a Kite, are so popular that they are still widely sung today.

Two interviewees expressed their favorite and interest in Chinese instrumental music in traditional Chinese music. They said that they are particularly fond of the soft lyric tone of erhu, and thought that the sound it gave out is just like human singing. The erhu song "The Moon Reflected in the Twin Ponds" created by a blind Chinese folk artist A-bing is their favorite. The lively melody is like sobbing, filled with sadness and anger. The pitch is sometimes euphemistic and low, sometimes intense and high, which not only expresses the resentment and sorrow in the author's heart, but also expresses the yearning for a better life and ideal realm.

Two interviewees indicated interest in opera of traditional Chinese music. One of the interviewees said that the opera has a variety of interesting performances, including speaking, singing, dancing, and acrobatic, which are very enjoyable to watch. Another interviewee also liked the unique features of Chinese opera, such as the use of cross-dressing, exaggerated facial makeup and various costumes and props, and thought opera is definitely the quintessence of Chinese culture.

Upon analysis of contents of all transcripts, several common themes of students' opinions emerged as shown below. Some examples of excerpts of the interview are also provided.

**Theme 1: Features and Functions of the Superstar Learning Application**

Interviewee 1

*“I think Superstar Learning Application’s interactive function can make me understand more about the course. When teachers send group tasks on Superstar Learning Application, I can form a group with several classmates for cooperative learning. We performed our respective duties. Some students searched for related written materials, some students searched for related audio and video materials, and some others recorded and summarized all kinds of materials to complete the task together and submitted it through the Superstar Learning Application. Both teachers and other group members could view the content submitted by the group. Teacher’s evaluation of group learning tasks or mutual evaluation among students through Superstar Learning Application could further deepen the understanding of certain types of Chinese traditional music works.”*

Interviewee 2

*“The feature of Superstar Learning Application favored by me is its detecting function. All the tests, no matter before, after or in class, all could better monitor my knowledge and fill the knowledge gap. I also like the selection and answering functions because it could motivate us, increase our enthusiasm and initiative to better understand and strengthen what we have learned in class.”*

**Theme 2 Improvement of Music Knowledge**

Interviewee 1

*“Yes, I think I improve. Besides the basic function such as learning preview videos through Superstar APP, finishing home work and so on, I think browsing extended video, audio, text and other materials related to Chinese music appreciation through Superstar Learning Application can help me to understand more. My basic theoretical knowledge of music is relatively good, and I could master the knowledge taught in class. So I had enough time to browse other materials about Chinese traditional music on Superstar Learning Application, such as text, audio and video data, broadening the depth and breadth of the understanding of Chinese traditional music, thus enhancing further the study of Chinese traditional music. All of the above could help me understand more about the Chinese traditional music.”*

Interviewee 2

*“Yes, I think I improve. I believe the preview video sent by teacher on the Superstar Learning Application is an effective way to improve my understanding of one type of traditional Chinese music because the preview video could quickly enable us to have a general understanding of a certain type of Chinese traditional music, such as the historical background, style characteristics, and development of this kind of Chinese traditional music. In addition, I think the after-class quizzes arranged by the teacher through the Superstar Learning Application can strengthen my understanding and knowledge of Chinese traditional*

*music. Even though I am weak in the basic theoretical knowledge of music, through the feedback given by the teacher after the class, I could clearly understand unclear concepts about Chinese traditional music.”*

### **Theme 3 Satisfaction in the Blended Chinese Traditional Music Course**

Interviewee 1

*“I would like blended learning in Chinese traditional music appreciation course because of the multi-dimensional assessment methods of blended learning. The examination method in the traditional class teaching is unitary. The end-of-term test would occupy most of the final assessment. Therefore, although I worked very hard in class and finished our homework with good quality and quantity, if I failed at the end-of-term test, my final assessment results would also be unsatisfactory. However, multi-dimensional assessment method was used in blended learning which focused more on the formative assessment. Online grades in all links, such as course videos, chapter quizzes, interviews, discussions, and check-in were all converted into a percentage of the final assessment score.”*

Interviewee 2

*“I would like blended learning in Chinese traditional music appreciation course. I am a person who likes to try new things. I think blended learning can meet the diversified and individual needs of learners. I can choose my study time and place freely. I also can choose what I want to browse freely. For example, I also prefer Guqin, a folk instrument in traditional Chinese music. In the process of blended learning, besides course video and lectures, I can learn Guqin by searching for more text, video and audio data through Superstar learning application.”*

### **Theme 4: Growing sense of musical appreciation**

Interviewees expressed different feelings and emotions towards the course after the experiment. Some said that their love for Chinese folk songs becomes more. Some interviewees expressed interest in Chinese national instrumental music, and some showed their love for the magnificent performances of Chinese opera. Nortvig, et al. (2018) argue that according to student needs, varying learning activities provide students with more opportunities to connect with the content being presented (cited in Jones, 2019) meaningfully.

Interviewee 1

*“I enjoy folk songs, especially when appreciating the folk songs of my hometown because I am familiar with the local conditions and traditional customs of my hometown, and could feel the charm of the folk songs deeply. For example, my hometown is in Yunnan. Yunnan is located in the highland belt, so the rhythm of local folk songs is relatively free; the melody is stable and the melody is beautiful. I can sing a few of the folk songs of my hometown, and I am proud of the beautiful folk songs in my hometown”.*

Interviewee 2

*“I am interested in Chinese folk instrumental music especially for erhu. I am particularly fond of the soft lyric tone of it, and thought that the sound it gave out is just like human singing. My favorite erhu song is "The Moon Reflected in the Twin Ponds". It is created by a blind Chinese folk artist A-bing . The lively melody is like sobbing, filled with sadness and anger. The pitch is sometimes euphemistic and low, sometimes intense and high, which not only expresses the resentment and sorrow in the author's heart, but also expresses the yearning for a better life and ideal realm.”*

Data collected from the interviewees indicate that students have positive attitude towards the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation course. Their learning experiences imply that the blended course has increased their knowledge about Chinese music, Chinese musical instruments and Chinese folk songs and help them appreciate Chinese culture more.

### **Discussion**

From the lens of the quantitative data, it was found that the blended Chinese Traditional Music course improved the music knowledge of the participants based on the results of pre-test and post-test. It indicates that the blended learning approach could enhance the acquisition of knowledge. This finding is congruent with the results of studies conducted by Edward, et al. (2019) who investigated the impact of blended learning on teaching Oriental Music in Sri Lanka. The study analyzed the academic performance of students learning in the blended learning classroom and students learning in traditional learning environment using the pre-test post-test design for both the control and experimental group. The findings of the experiment indicated that students who studied Oriental Music in the blended learning class showed a significant improvement in their music academic performances after the intervention. Other features of the blended learning that helped in the improvement of students' academic performance are the accessibility of obtaining information any time, any place, the real time discussion with the instructor, and discussion forums which enabled the students to seek clarifications about practical and theoretical concepts which were difficult to understand instead of waiting for the next face-to-face class. The supplementary audio and video materials which were especially prepared and uploaded to the LMS for the weekly lessons, played an intrinsic beneficial role for the students, as they covered all the practical and some theory components which were highly difficult for the students to understand in the absence of the music teacher.-Providing a resourceful and supportive learning environment has a significant impact on students' learning success (Chen, 2007). Since the blended learning is a student-centered instruction, it boosts students' motivation and encourages self-directed learning making the blended learning as one of the best fitted instructional methods for teaching oriental music. Blended learning makes learning Oriental Music more interesting than the traditional method (Sarah, 2017).

Another study which supports the findings of this study was the implementation of a blended curriculum model for music education called “In Harmony” which was designed and implemented by Portowitz, et al. (2014) in an Israeli school for 9-10-year-old students. The blended curriculum combined digital strategies that included game-based learning, physical practice, online learning experiences, and digital benchmarking with traditional techniques.

Participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group. They were evaluated using pre-and post-tests for improvement in the student's working memory and musical understanding. Findings revealed improvement in working memory in the experimental group but not in the control group. Although qualitative analysis of musical knowledge tests showed that both the experimental and control group improved their musical understanding, students in the experimental group exhibited greater engagement.

In the study conducted by El-Deghaidy and Nouby (2008) on the effectiveness of blended e-learning cooperative approach on Pre-service teachers' achievement and attitudes towards e-learning and cooperativeness, results suggest that PSTs in the experimental group have higher achievement levels in their post-overall-course-test, comprehensive-score, and attitudes towards e-learning environments compared to those of the control group. The researchers also suggest that the specific design of the course may be responsible for these changes.

Munteanu, et al. (2014) researched ICT blended instructions for arts education in Romania. They found out that the blended instructions were more effective than only face-to-face instructions and only online instructions; this could be attributed to multimedia content chosen and structured by the teachers and choosing technologies that would increase student engagement and promote experiential learning.

From the lens of the qualitative data, the findings of theme 1 is in line with the findings of Zhao (2019) who suggested that Flipping classroom teaching enhances students' learning effect with the help of mobile terminal APP like the Superstar application that was used in the study. The Superstar application helped the interviewees in learning Chinese traditional music because of its features and functions. Interviewees also indicated using the application again in learning other subjects. Introducing a learning application into teaching makes teaching diversified and makes up for shortages of traditional teaching (Zhao, et al., 2019), especially for courses laden with vast information. This interactive teaching mode greatly improves students' learning interest, and enhances students' ability of autonomous learning and problem solving. Their study showed that the experimental group is significantly better than the control group in terms of test scores, indicating that the learning APP teaching model is conducive to improving students' performance.

In the experimental study of Edward, et. al (2019) on "The Impact of Teaching Oriental Music Using Blended Learning Approach", real time discussion with the instructor and discussion forums enabled the students to seek clarifications about practical and theoretical concepts which are difficult to understand. The supplementary audio and video materials which were especially prepared and uploaded to the LMS for the weekly lessons, played an intrinsic beneficial role for the students because these supplementary materials helped students understand more about theories and concepts which are difficult to understand.

In terms of theme 2 which is improvement of music knowledge, students confirmed that the blended course and the basic functions of the Superstar Learning Application helped them understand the course more. The videos, audio, text and other materials related to Chinese music appreciation helped them gain more knowledge. This is in congruent with the findings of a study conducted by Zhao, et al (2019) who affirmed that the application of learning platform enhanced the students' subjective consciousness of learning. Concepts students found difficult to understand were supplemented by previewing the course in advance. Some

students would consult relevant materials they did not understand. Students were able to improve their ability to collect information and solve problems. They could improve their ability to collect information, solve problems and think actively.

It was reported by Deng, Yang, Li and Li (2018) that mobile learning mode of flipping classroom teaching had achieved good effect in the process of theoretical teaching (cited in Zhao, et al. 2019).

As regards theme 3 which is satisfaction with the blended Chinese Traditional Music Course, students indicated that the blended learning in Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation course is beneficial as it can meet the diversified and individual needs of learners. They can also browse contents they are interested in. This supports the finding of Zhao, et al (2019) who stated that students generally hold a positive attitude towards the blended learning using applications. In addition, findings of a study conducted by Shu & Lertlit (2018) on the application of blended learning in “Chinese Pinyin learning” at a private school in Bangkok reveal that the students were satisfied with the “Chinese Pinyin learning” using the blended learning.

Theme 4 is the growing sense of music appreciation. In a study conducted by Ruokonena & Ruismäki (2016) on e-learning in music, one student in the case study said that even though she knew everything about piano playing she admitted that the blended learning taught her a lot of new techniques for piano playing and enriched her learning in individual ways which changed her attitude about teaching and learning piano.

According to Cruywagen and Potgieter (2020), using a learning application like wiki, one could get an idea of what other people think in music which adds to one’s knowledge and broadens general knowledge of music by seeing what other people have posted, getting opportunity to see other’s opinions and comparing them to what one has posted.

The research work of Ruokonena & Ruismäki (2016) showed that the combination of online and face-to-face learning made students more engaged in learning music and helped students enhance their learning experience of music outside the classroom through the creative use of information from the internet and online lessons. The qualitative data from students’ reflective writings about their learning experiences in the blended learning class confirmed that the blended strategies enhanced their engagement and music learning through online activities of the music course and improved effectiveness and efficiencies of the course by reducing lecture time and allowing time for the group work to produce creative ideas. The use of information and communication technologies improved students’ attitudes towards independent learning and improving their musical skills.

## **Conclusion**

Results of the study indicate that the blended design of the Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation course using Superstar Learning Application was effective in improving the Chinese traditional music knowledge of non-music majors in Hunan Agriculture University. Results of the interview show that the non-music majors have positive opinions towards the use of Superstar Learning Application as a teaching and learning tool in the blended Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation course. The results prove that the blended learning course designed by making full use of modern information technology tools is a way that may benefit

students more. Through interviews, it can be further learned that the Superstar Learning Application provides complete online teaching content, such as course videos and course resources. Students have welcomed the blended teaching form of online autonomous learning and offline classroom expansion and tutoring and online communication functions, such as notification, quick answer, discussion, and voting. The potential of a blended course in the teaching and learning of music concepts is vast.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that curriculum developers consider integrating technology into the teaching and learning process. However, the choice of educational technology is crucial in the success of implementing a blended learning module. Besides, careful planning of the curriculum, contents, activities, and assessment is of utmost importance for implementing any technology-integrated course. Therefore, in the subsequent teaching of Chinese Traditional Music Appreciation Courses, it is necessary to continue to consolidate and improve the existing curriculum model as well as improve and enrich blended teaching contents.

In addition, it is recommended that blended teaching and learning be promoted in more courses, continuously optimize blended teaching evaluation system, and promote the vigorous development of this teaching model to meet the needs of different learners.

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