

# An Analysis on the Blended Teaching Mode of College English

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This paper explores blended teaching in college English from five aspects: the connotation, theoretical basis, design principles, advantages, and challenges of blended teaching and blended teaching models. The purpose is to attract more foreign language practitioners and learners to pay attention to this model and put it into practice.

*Keywords:* college English, blended teaching mode, constructivism, online and offline

## Introduction

Since the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the process of education modernization has been accelerating. Education informatization, as an endogenous variable of education reform, has profoundly changed the form of education. During the COVID-19 prevention and control period, the Ministry of Education issued the Guiding Opinions on Organizing and Management Online Teaching in Regular Institutions of Higher Learning During the Epidemic Prevention and Control Period, guiding universities across the country to carry out online teaching practice activities in an orderly manner. In the post-epidemic era, blended teaching, as a product of the high integration of education and technology, makes full use of the advantages of online and offline teaching, and creates a new paradigm of talent training in the all-media era, which is one of the important means to improve the quality and efficiency of teaching in Chinese universities at present and in the future.

## The Connotation of Blended Teaching and Blended Teaching Mode

### Blended Teaching

The concept of “blended teaching” can be traced back to the late 1990s. Bonk and Graham believe that blended teaching is “a mixture of face-to-face teaching and computer-aided online learning” (Wang, Zhu, & Li, 2018). In China, He Kekang (2004) introduced the concept of blended teaching into Chinese education circles for the first time, and is the first scholar to study blended teaching. In his opinion, “blended learning is to combine the advantages of traditional learning methods with the advantages of e-learning (i.e., digital or networked

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learning)” (p. 5); Xie Xiaoshan and Zhu Zulin (2012) and He Ke-kang (2016) pointed out that the so-called “blended teaching” refers to the integration of the advantages of traditional teaching and digital teaching, and the reference of the strengths of teacher-centered and student-centered teaching concepts, which give play to the leading role of teachers to monitor, inspire, and guide the teaching process, and fully reflect the autonomy and enthusiasm of students as the main body of learning.

### **Blended Teaching Mode**

Blended teaching mode refers to a “online + offline” teaching method that combines online teaching and traditional classroom face-to-face teaching. It is the inevitable product of the teaching reform in the information age. Its core goal is to improve the teaching quality and teaching efficiency through the reform of teaching mode. It can not only play the leading role of teachers in classroom teaching, but also reflect the main body of students. It is not a simple combination of online teaching and the teaching elements of offline teaching, nor a simple addition of the teaching elements, but the integration of the two learning methods. It is the reconstruction of all the elements of teaching and learning, and to optimize, combine, or integrate them. The “blend” of the blended teaching mode is reflected in the following aspects: the mixture of different teaching methods, namely, “teaching method + discussion method + independent learning teaching method + project teaching method”; the mixture of different learning resources, namely, the combination of textbooks and PPT, the integration of textbooks and modern online learning resources (audio, video, movies, websites, online teaching platforms, etc.); the mixture of different learning environments, namely, the mixed use of the traditional classroom and the multimedia classroom, autonomous learning center, network learning platform, smart classroom, etc.; the mixture of different learning methods, namely, “the combination of online + offline, independent + cooperation”, etc. At present, the emergence of various online teaching platforms has promoted the application and development of the online and offline blended teaching mode. This mode of integrating online and offline pays more attention to the play of students’ subjective initiative, puts students in the first place, and promotes the comprehensive enhancement of students’ comprehensive literacy through the integration and optimization of teaching resources (Wang, 2019).

### **Theoretical Basis**

Blended teaching organization mode is derived from the framework of constructivism theory. Constructivism was first proposed by the Swiss psychologist Piaget. He believed that cognition is an active construction process based on the subject’s existing knowledge and experience (Wen & Jia, 2002), which is the core view of constructivism. On the basis of Piaget’s theory, many experts and scholars have put forward different theories, and on the basis of criticizing the traditional teaching concepts, they have put forward the constructivism learning concept. Constructivist learning view holds that learners, in a specific background, namely social and cultural background, using the necessary study materials, independently acquire knowledge with the help of others (including teachers and classmates) by constructing meaning, rather than through the teaching of teachers (Wang, 2018). The purpose of the construction is not the simple application of network platform and teaching resources, but with the help of network platform and teaching resources to expand students’ learning dimensions, improve the depth of learning from both online and offline perspectives, broaden the learning category, clear learning goals, and make the students deep understand theoretical knowledge in the process of gradual teaching. Thus, the efficiency and quality of students’ learning will be improved with the help of teachers (Li, 2019).

## **Design Principle**

### **Adhering to the Student-Centered Personalized Learning**

Dewey's child-centered theory is the philosophical basis of blended teaching. He once said, "If we treat students uniformly, we cannot establish a truly scientific pedagogy" (Dewey, 1981, p. 34). In traditional English classrooms, students use the same textbooks and achieve the same learning goals under the teacher's "indoctrination" teaching. They carry out the same learning evaluation methods. However, due to limitations in teaching conditions and the teacher's "one to many" organization, although some teachers may try personalized teaching methods, it is difficult for students to achieve personalized learning goals.

Blended teaching mode based on the modern network teaching platform greatly enriched the teachers' teaching methods and teaching materials; teachers can make full use of teaching resources in the vivid image of pictures, audio, video, and other resources independent building system, personalized online English courses; students through online learning autonomously master their learning process; students can also choose their English books they are interested in to read, and truly realize personalized autonomous learning.

### **Adhering to the Effective Integration of Online and Offline**

The biggest difference between blended teaching mode and traditional classroom teaching mode is that it combines online autonomous learning with offline classroom teaching. In the network environment, through computers, smart phones, and other electronic devices, students are guided to conduct personalized independent learning, and to diagnose their own learning effect according to the learning objectives and tasks. The advantage of this change is that it improves students' ability to independently build knowledge and solve problems. However, complete online learning also has its disadvantages, for example, it is difficult for students to grasp the key and difficult points, which makes learning inefficient. Therefore, offline class teaching can be conducted with meaningful listening, communication, and discussion under the organization of teachers, so as to form a deep interaction between teachers and students (Feng, Wang, & Wu, 2018).

### **Adhering to Multiple Integration and Improving the Learning Effectiveness**

The blend of learning methods is not only a combination of online and offline learning forms, but also a diversified pursuit. Both the online and offline learning process should be a process of joint construction between the two. The text, audio, video, PPT, and other resources of the online course platform provide knowledge carriers for students' independent learning, while the class discussion function of the learning platform provides a virtual space for cooperative learning and enables cooperative learning to break through the boundaries of time and space. Its networked characteristics make group online collaborative learning the norm.

## **The Advantages of Blended Teaching in College English**

### **Strong Flexibility, Breaking Through the Limitations of Time and Place**

The rapid development of network information technology has brought many conveniences, and diversified English teaching videos are widely disseminated on online platforms, including special lectures, audio-visual integration, fragmented vocabulary teaching, and many other forms. College students can learn English flexibly and conveniently through online channels. On the one hand, the rich and diverse English teaching resources and convenient access methods on the internet allow college students to engage in English learning in their spare time and gain knowledge without having to enter the English classroom, breaking through the limitations of traditional

time and place. On the other hand, college English teachers can continuously enhance their comprehensive abilities and literacy through online learning resources, thereby improving teaching methods and models, and enhancing classroom teaching effectiveness. College English teaching can also be carried out in a more flexible and convenient way by learning information technology methods.

### **Meeting the Needs and Integrating Diverse Teaching Resources**

The application of blended teaching mode in college English can optimize the autonomous learning experience of college students, improve the efficiency of English knowledge learning, and highly align with students' learning needs. Firstly, there are various forms and types of English teaching videos available on online platforms. During the process of autonomous learning, college students can choose targeted course videos based on their own shortcomings and learning needs, greatly improving their learning initiative. Secondly, in the blended teaching mode of college English, students can obtain a more enjoyable and rich learning experience, which is conducive to their enthusiasm and enthusiasm for learning college English knowledge, and gradually cultivate good habits in the process of autonomous learning. This has positive significance for the personalized development of contemporary college students.

### **Precise Entry to Broaden English Learning Space**

The most significant difference and characteristic of blended teaching mode compared to traditional college English teaching mode is precise entry, which has a promoting effect on expanding the learning space of college English. The effective application of blended teaching mode has gradually changed the traditional classroom structure led by college English teachers. By utilizing online teaching platforms to provide students with rich learning content and consolidating knowledge and gaining a sense of learning experience through classroom practical activities of offline teaching, students' learning interests and needs are accurately grasped, which is crucial for helping students broaden their learning space. By integrating the two teaching methods, the reform, innovation, and development of traditional college English teaching models have been achieved. It is conducive to optimizing the overall efficiency and quality of college English course teaching, and guiding clear directions for teaching reform (Hu, 2021).

## **The Challenges Faced by Blended Teaching of College English**

After two years of blended teaching practice in college English, this paper summarizes the main problems and challenges faced from both teaching and learning aspects.

### **Considering From the Side of Teachers**

Firstly, in the blended teaching mode, teachers need to spend a lot of time and effort to improve their teaching skills, such as the production of teaching courseware. The recording of micro courses and other videos, as well as the effective implementation of cloud classrooms, require teachers to have a high level of information technology literacy. Secondly, the application of information technology in teaching requires teachers to have strong teaching design skills, and to design classroom activities that are practical to students, can stimulate their interest in learning, and can truly improve their language proficiency. Once again, blended teaching has added the section of "online learning" in addition to traditional face-to-face classes. Before class, teachers need to prepare and upload various teaching materials, assign self-learning tasks, view students' online learning records, answer questions online, grade course assignments, and provide timely feedback. Finally, the forms of communication between teachers and students are diverse, and the interaction between teachers and students is more convenient

and frequent. This invisibly puts teachers in teaching anytime and anywhere (Bao, 2015), increasing their workload and teaching burden.

### Considering From the Side of Students

Firstly, blended teaching has added various forms of online self-directed learning content, aggravating students' learning tasks. Some students have a weak foundation in English learning and lack enthusiasm and initiative. Faced with heavy learning tasks, they are tired of coping, and the effectiveness of online self-directed learning is not ideal. Secondly, some students have poor self-awareness and self-control in learning, and may engage in distractions during online learning (He, 2005). Once again, there are also some problems in the process of carrying out group activities, such as insufficient communication and communication among some group members, and insufficient proactive and in-depth cooperation.

### Conclusion

In short, in the context of the all media era, the blended teaching mode of college English is a gradually emerging and efficient teaching mode. This model combines the advantages of previous teaching models and has been improved to address the shortcomings of traditional teaching models. Although there may be some challenges in practice, the authors firmly believe that this teaching model will be adopted and accepted by more and more foreign language teachers and learners, and its application will become increasingly widespread.

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