

# Exploration of Blended Online and Offline Teaching Mode for College English Empowered by Digital Technology

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## ABSTRACT

In the context of the continuous development of educational technology, the blended online and offline teaching mode has gradually become an important trend of educational reform. Language teaching and learning are inevitably entering the digital age. However, the blended learning model of college English under digital empowerment is both an opportunity and a challenge. This article elaborates on the application and practice of blended learning mode in college English courses, explores the advantages of online and offline teaching mode, as well as the strategies and approaches for implementing blended learning, providing useful references for improving the quality of college English teaching.

**Keywords:** College English, Blended teaching mode, Digital empowerment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At present, with the accelerating process of globalization, the status of English, as an important tool for international communication, has become increasingly crucial. College English, as a basic course in higher education, is of great significance for cultivating students' comprehensive English application ability, cross-cultural communication ability, and autonomous learning ability. However, in recent years, with the deepening of teaching reforms, the credits and class hours of college English have been significantly reduced. Under this circumstances, how to maintain the teaching quality of college English and meet students' foreign language learning needs has become the focus of college English teaching reform. Meanwhile, along with the rapid development of information technology, the blended teaching mode has emerged and become the cutting-edge direction of college English teaching reform. The "Teaching Guide for College English (2020 Edition)" clearly states that all colleges and universities should make full use of information technology to implement blended teaching [1].

The concept of blended teaching originated from the concept of blended learning abroad and

was first proposed by He Kekang at the Seventh Global Chinese Computer Education Application Conference, focusing on teachers' blended teaching design, with the aim of promoting the improvement of teaching quality (Peng Fen, Jin Xianhua, 2021) [2]. He Kekang (2004) believes that blended learning combines the advantages of online and offline learning and emphasizes the construction of a new teaching structure with teachers as the leading role and students as the main body, creating a "autonomous, inquiry-based, and cooperative" learning atmosphere, which is conducive to the cultivation of innovative talents in China. [3]

Based on the application of the blended teaching mode empowered by digital technology, this article sorts out the theoretical basis and characteristics of blended teaching, introduces its implementation process and advantages, analyzes its teaching effects and the problems existing in teaching practice, and proposes corresponding solutions as well.

## **2. THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE BLENDED TEACHING MODE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH**

### ***2.1 Constructivist Theory***

Constructivism emphasizes that learning is the process by which learners acquire knowledge through meaning construction with the assistance of others and the use of necessary learning materials in a specific situation (He Kekang, 1997) [4]. In the blended teaching of college English, online learning platforms provide students with rich resources and real contexts, facilitating their autonomous and collaborative learning and the construction of personalized knowledge systems. Blended teaching of college English has developed under the guidance of constructivist theory, reflecting the shift in the guiding ideology of foreign language teaching from behaviorism to constructivism: from emphasizing intensive training in listening, speaking, reading, and writing to emphasizing the construction of a learning environment based on "situations," "collaboration," "interaction," and "meaning construction" as the basic elements, and building an integrated online and offline three-dimensional and multi-interactive intelligent teaching environment for teachers, students, resources, activities, technology, and platforms (Hu Jiehui, Hu Jiasheng, 2020) [5]. With the continuous deep integration of information technology and language courses, emphasizing the construction of the learning environment is one of its basic characteristics.

### ***2.2 Connectivist Learning Theory***

The connectivist learning theory proposed by George Siemens (2005) [6] states that learning is the process of connecting specialized nodes and information sources. In the online environment, knowledge exists in the form of nodes, and learners acquire and create knowledge by establishing connections. The blended teaching mode of college English expands knowledge nodes, promotes communication and interaction between students and teachers, classmates, and other English learners, and expands the knowledge network. Connectivism is a learning theory in the digital age, emphasizing that learning is a process of connection and relationship establishment. Knowledge exists in multiple viewpoints, and learning is the process of connecting nodes or information sources. To facilitate learning, it is necessary to cultivate and maintain connections. This theory holds that

learners need to constantly establish connections with external knowledge sources and acquire and create knowledge through connections and interactions.

The blended teaching mode combines the advantages of online teaching and traditional teaching. It appropriately combines face-to-face teaching methods digital technologies to promote students' learning efficiency and improve learning effects. This teaching mode emphasizes teachers as the leading role and students as the main body, focusing on the autonomy and creativity of teachers and students. Its basic teaching form is the combination of online learning and face-to-face learning. Connectivism emphasizes the importance of online learning and considers learning as a networked process. This is consistent with the concept of leveraging the advantages of digital technology in the blended teaching mode. Through blended teaching, students can learn and practice in both virtual and real scenarios, improving the flexibility and personalization of learning.

### ***2.3 Situated Cognition Learning Theory***

The situated cognition learning theory holds that learning should be placed in a real situation, and knowledge and the situation are interdependent (Brown et al., 1989) [7]. The blended teaching mode of college English creates diverse language situations through the combination of online and offline, allowing students to use English in real situations and improving their language comprehension and application abilities.

The situated cognition learning theory emphasizes that learning is a process closely related to the situation, and the learning of knowledge and skills should be carried out through interaction with the situation to promote the learning effect. Through the combination of traditional face-to-face teaching with online learning, blended teaching mode improves both teaching effects and students' learning experiences. With the support of online learning platforms and multimedia resources, a more realistic language learning situation is created for students to enhance their learning interest and participation. The situated cognition learning theory emphasizes individual differences and personalized learning, believing that each student has their unique learning style and needs. Online and offline teaching mode can provide personalized learning resources and support based on the different needs and levels of students to meet their personalized learning needs. The situated cognition learning

theory considers learning as an active process, and students should play a main role in the learning process. Consistently, blended teaching, with the help of digital platforms means, cultivates students' autonomous learning ability, enabling them to be more active and positive in the learning process.

### **3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BLENDED TEACHING MODE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH**

#### ***3.1 Integration of Teaching Methods***

The blended teaching mode of college English realizes the organic combination of online and offline teaching. In the online part, students can independently obtain course materials, watch teaching videos, participate in online discussions, and complete homework and tests through the online platform. In the offline classroom, teachers conduct face-to-face explanations, organize interactive activities, carry out oral communication, and answer questions. This integrated mode gives full play to the flexibility of online learning and the direct interaction advantages of offline learning, breaks the time and space limitations of traditional teaching, enables students to learn anytime and anywhere with network access, and improves learning efficiency by utilizing fragmented time.

#### ***3.2 Personalization and Autonomy of the Learning Process***

This mode can provide personalized learning plans based on students' English proficiency levels, learning progress, interest preferences, and learning styles. Students can independently choose learning content, paths, and time, be responsible for their own learning, arrange learning plans, select learning resources, and self-monitor the learning process. This helps stimulate students' learning enthusiasm and initiative, cultivate their self-management and autonomous learning abilities, and lay the foundation for lifelong learning.

#### ***3.3 Richness and Diversity of Teaching Resources and Interactions***

Empowered by digital technology, blended teaching mode integrates diversified teaching materials, including textbooks, multimedia courseware, audio and video materials, online courses, and online resources. At the same time, through the online platform, real-time interaction and communication between students and teachers,

and among students are realized. Teachers can dynamically adjust and optimize teaching based on students' learning data and offline performance, making teaching more targeted and effective and promoting knowledge sharing and cooperative learning.

### **4. ADVANTAGES OF THE BLENDED TEACHING MODE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH**

#### ***4.1 Teaching Efficiency and Resource Optimization***

The blended teaching mode of college English breaks the time and space limitations, allowing students to flexibly utilize fragmented time for autonomous learning. Teachers can monitor students' learning conditions in real-time through the online teaching platform, conduct data analysis, and precisely adjust teaching strategies (Wang Zhuli, 2013) [8], significantly improving teaching efficiency. At the same time, the online teaching platform enables the wide sharing of high-quality teaching resources, reduces waste, and allows teachers to optimize and update resources based on feedback to ensure their quality and applicability, achieving a rational allocation of resources.

#### ***4.2 Autonomy and Personalization in Learning***

Blended teaching effectively cultivates students' abilities to plan their learning and manage themselves, stimulating their learning interest and initiative. It can customize learning plans based on individual differences, allowing students to adjust their learning rhythms and select content independently, meeting personalized learning needs and promoting students' personalized development. Students need to independently plan their learning process, select learning content and methods in the blended teaching mode, which is conducive to cultivating their autonomous learning and self-management abilities (Yu Shengquan et al., 2005) [9].

#### ***4.3 Ability Cultivation and Educational Adaptation***

It creates more practical opportunities for students to improve their application abilities such as oral expression and cross-cultural communication. It also cultivates students' innovation and cooperation abilities through

innovative activities and teamwork, enhancing their comprehensive qualities. Additionally, it conforms to the information technology transformation trend in educational development, integrates the advantages of modern and traditional teaching, and provides a high-quality and efficient learning experience.

## **5. THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE BLENDED TEACHING MODE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH**

### ***5.1 Teaching Preparation Stage***

At preparation stage, teachers need to conduct in-depth analyses of teaching goals and students' actual situations, carefully design teaching plans covering online and offline aspects, and clearly define teaching content, activities, and assessment methods. Carefully select suitable online teaching platforms and tools, such as powerful MOOC platforms, convenient learning management systems, and efficient online testing systems, and master their operation methods proficiently. Widely collect and integrate teaching resources, including elaborately produced teaching videos, vivid courseware, targeted exercises, and inspiring extended reading materials, and upload them to the online teaching platform in a timely manner.

### ***5.2 Online Teaching Stage***

During online learning, students usually independently obtain course content through the online teaching platform, carefully watch teaching videos, deeply read textbooks and related materials, and actively construct the knowledge system. They complete online homework, tests, and discussions on time, actively interact and communicate with teachers and classmates, and promptly solve various problems encountered during the learning process.

Teachers closely monitor the online teaching platform, monitor students' learning situations in real-time, promptly reply to students' questions and feedback, and provide professional learning guidance and objective evaluations.

### ***5.3 Offline Teaching Stage***

At offline stage, teachers tend to conduct in-depth explanations and Q&A sessions on the key and difficult points of online teaching, carefully

organize students to carry out various activities such as group discussions, role-playing, and oral practice, consolidate and expand the learned knowledge, and enhance language application abilities. Through assessing students' offline learning performance comprehensively, teachers would be able to provide accurate evaluations and targeted feedback, and flexibly adjust teaching strategies and methods based on the actual situation.

### ***5.4 Teaching Evaluation Stage***

A diversified evaluation system (such as, combination of formative evaluation and summative evaluation) is of great essentiality for blended teaching. Formative evaluation is based on data analysis of the online learning platform, homework completion, classroom performance, etc.; summative evaluation may adopt various forms such as final exams, oral tests, and writing tests. Teachers conduct in-depth reflection and comprehensive summaries of the teaching effects, carefully analyze the problems and deficiencies in the teaching process, and propose practical improvement measures to provide valuable references for subsequent teaching.

## **6. ANALYSIS OF THE TEACHING EFFECTS OF THE BLENDED TEACHING MODE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH**

### ***6.1 Significant Improvement in Students' Performances of English Competence***

By comparing classes implementing the blended teaching mode with those adopting the traditional teaching mode, it is found that students' final exam scores in English under the blended teaching mode have generally improved. Most studies have found that students' overall proficiency in English listening, speaking, reading, and writing has significantly improved after the experiment, especially in writing ability. (Li Yuzhen, Jia Jiyu, Jiang Xueqing, 2022) [10]

### ***6.2 Effective Enhancement of Students' English Application Abilities***

The blended teaching mode creates more practical opportunities for students, enabling them to communicate and express themselves in English freely in real contexts. Through various classroom activities, group projects, and online discussions, students' oral expression and cross-cultural

communication abilities have significantly improved (Hu Jiehui et al., 2014) [11]. For example, in an English speech contest, students in the blended teaching mode performed better, not only with higher language accuracy but also with greater advantages in content innovation and expression fluency.

### **6.3 Positive Improvement in Students' Learning Attitudes and Autonomous Learning Abilities**

With the influence of the blended teaching mode, students' learning enthusiasm and initiative have significantly increased. They can actively utilize online resources for preview and review and reasonably arrange learning time and progress (Zhu Yonghai et al., 2014) [12]. Surveys show that over 80% of students believe that the blended teaching mode makes them more willing to learn English and enables them to manage their learning time more effectively.

## **7. PROBLEMS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE BLENDED TEACHING MODE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH**

### **7.1 The Information Technology Literacy and Teaching Competence of Teachers Require Enhancement**

The blended teaching mode places higher requirements on teachers' information technology application ability and teaching design ability. Some teachers have deficiencies in aspects such as the operation of online teaching platforms, the production of digital teaching resources, and the organization of online teaching activities, and need to strengthen relevant training and learning (Yang Xiaohong et al., 2014) [13].

### **7.2 The Autonomous Learning Ability and Self-Management Ability of Students Vary Greatly**

The blended teaching mode emphasizes students' autonomous learning, but some students lack learning motivation and self-discipline, cannot fully utilize online learning resources, resulting in poor learning effects (Chen Jianlin, 2015) [14]. For example, some students are easily distracted during online learning and cannot complete learning tasks on time.

### **7.3 The Stability and Functionality of Digital Technology and Teaching Platforms Need Further Optimization**

Online teaching relies on a stable network environment and a complete teaching platform. However, problems such as network failures and lagging of teaching platforms occur from time to time in actual teaching, affecting the normal progress of teaching. At the same time, some teaching platforms' functions, such as interactive communication and learning monitoring, are not yet perfect and cannot meet the actual teaching needs (Wang Youmei, 2016) [15].

### **7.4 The Connection Between Online and Offline Teaching Lacks Sufficient Tightness**

Online and offline teaching should be organically integrated and mutually complementary. However, some teachers fail to handle the relationship between the two properly during the teaching process, resulting in repeated or disjointed teaching content and affecting the teaching effect (Hu Jiasheng et al., 2013) [16]. For example, the key points of online teaching are not effectively consolidated in offline teaching, or the content of offline teaching has no connection with online teaching.

## **8. STRATEGIES TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE BLENDED TEACHING MODE OF COLLEGE ENGLISH**

### **8.1 Strengthening Teacher Training**

Schools and educational institutions should regularly organize teachers to participate in training on information technology and teaching ability improvement, covering contents such as the application of online teaching platforms, the development of digital resources, and teaching design methods. Encourage teachers to carry out teaching research and reform practices and explore innovative teaching methods and strategies suitable for the blended teaching mode (Jiao Jianli et al., 2009) [17].

### **8.2 Improving the Cultivation of Students' Autonomous Learning Ability**

Teachers should focus on guiding students to establish correct learning attitudes and goals during the teaching process and impart effective learning methods and strategies. For example, conduct learning method lectures, establish study groups, and formulate personalized learning plans to help students improve their autonomous learning ability and self-management ability (Zheng Yanqun, 2017) [18].

### **8.3 Optimizing Network Technology and Teaching Platforms**

Schools and relevant departments should increase investment in network infrastructure and teaching platform construction to ensure network stability and complete platform functions. Maintain close cooperation with technical service providers, promptly solve technical problems, continuously improve the functions of teaching platforms, and meet teaching needs (Li Mang et al., 2018) [19].

### **8.4 Enhancing the Connection Between Online and Offline Teaching**

Teachers need comprehensively take the characteristics and advantages of online and offline teaching into consideration, and reasonably design teaching content and activities. Strengthen the organic connection between the two through methods such as setting preview tasks, review summaries, and online and offline discussions to form a coherent teaching system.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The college English blended learning model, emerging from the deep integration of information technology and education, offers unmatched advantages over traditional teaching models. By integrating online and offline approaches, it not only boosts teaching efficiency and strengthens students' self-learning abilities but also optimizes the allocation of teaching resources. However, the implementation process still poses many challenges that necessitate concerted efforts from schools, teachers, and students to adopt effective solutions. As information technology continues to evolve and teaching reforms deepen, it is anticipated that the college English blended learning model will further improve and optimize, providing a strong boost to the quality of college English instruction.

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