Study on Effective Teaching Modes of English Classes in the Online Environment of Independent Colleges—A Case Study of Listening Courses for English Majors

Xueshuang Yang*

Shenqi Ethnic Medicine College of Guizhou Medical University, Guiyang 550005, Guizhou, China

*Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

Abstract: Based on the learning characteristics of English majors in independent colleges and focusing on the technical advantages of the online environment, this study systematically explores effective teaching models for English listening courses through the research path of theoretical exploration, model construction, empirical testing, and optimization and promotion. It aims to break through the bottlenecks of traditional teaching, enhance students' initiative and effectiveness in listening and learning, and provide replicable and promotable practical experience for the digital reform of English courses in independent colleges.

Keywords: Independent colleges; Online environment; English listening; Teaching model; Flipped classroom; SPOC; Blended teaching

1. Introduction

Against the dual backdrop of the digital transformation of education and the improvement of higher education quality, independent colleges, as an important part of the higher education system, are faced with an urgent demand for cultivating applied English professionals. As a core carrier of language input, listening courses for English majors are a key link in improving students' comprehensive language application abilities. However, the limitations of the traditional listening teaching model, such as "one-way listening and mechanical answering", the homogeneity of teaching resources, and the lack of interactivity, are particularly prominent in the teaching practice of independent colleges. These problems lead to insufficient learning interest of students, weak application of learning strategies, and lagging cultivation of cross-cultural communication competence [1]. With the deep integration of network technology and education, the popularization of smart teaching platforms

such as Rain Classroom and Superstar Learning, and the enrichment of multimodal teaching resources, new possibilities have been provided for the reform of listening courses [1]. Therefore, exploring the scientific integration path of English teaching and Internet technology in independent colleges to provide students with a diversified language learning environment has become a key issue that needs to be addressed in current English listening teaching in independent colleges.

2. Current situation of English teaching in independent colleges

2.1. Rigid teaching models and insufficient interactivity

Survey data show that most English listening courses for English majors in independent colleges still adhere to the traditional teaching model, with the core process of teachers playing audio, students completing exercises, and checking answers in class. The teaching process is characterized by "one-way input and passive reception." In a questionnaire survey of 40 teachers, 65% of them indicated that their classes mainly consist of "listening material, playing, and answer explanation", while only 23% of the classes design group interactive or task-based activities. In this model, students lack opportunities for active participation, classroom activity is low, and it is difficult to transform listening input into language application abilities.

2.2. Single teaching resources and lack of adaptability

Most existing listening teaching resources support audio materials for textbooks, which are biased towards academic and standardized content and lack corpus materials in real language contexts. In interviews, 72% of students reported that "textbook listening materials are disconnected from actual communication scenarios", and 68% of students hope to add real corpus materials such as film and television clips, news interviews, and workplace dialogues. Meanwhile, the resources lack scientific difficulty grading, which cannot meet the personalized needs of students with different English proficiency levels, resulting in a polarization phenomenon where students with weak foundations cannot keep up, and students with strong abilities are "not challenged enough."

2.3. One-sided evaluation system and lack of competence orientation

The current evaluation of listening courses is still dominated by summative assessment. 78% of teachers stated that the final exam score accounts for more than 60% of the total score. The evaluation content focuses on the result-oriented testing of listening comprehension, ignoring key dimensions such as the application of learning strategies, interactive participation, and progress during the learning process. This "score-oriented" evaluation method leads students to overemphasize the accuracy of answers, lack motivation to actively explore learning strategies and improve cross-cultural understanding abilities, and thus fails to achieve the teaching goal of "promoting learning through evaluation" [2].

2.4. Superficial application of technology and insufficient teaching integration

Although most independent colleges are equipped with basic multimedia teaching equipment, the application of technology is still at a superficial stage. The survey found that 80% of teachers only use network technology for basic functions such as playing audio and displaying PPT, and the utilization rate of interactive tools such as Rain Classroom and dubbing software is less than 30%. Some teachers have a fear of new technologies and lack systematic digital teaching design capabilities, failing to give full play to the advantages of the online

environment in resource sharing, real-time feedback, and personalized guidance.

3. New English teaching models in the online environment

3.1. The online teaching model provides intuitive, rich, and concrete video information for college students

The online environment breaks the limitation of a single audio input in traditional listening teaching. By integrating multimodal resources such as film and television clips, TED talks, news reports, and documentaries, it provides students with intuitive and three-dimensional language learning scenarios. The "multimodal listening resource database" constructed in this study follows the "5C Principle" for material selection, covering 6 major themes, including cultural exchange, academic discussion, and workplace communication, with a total of more than 60 resources collected. These resources take videos as the core carrier, integrating multiple symbols such as images, sounds, and texts. They not only help students understand language content with the assistance of scene images, but also enable them to intuitively perceive non-verbal information such as pronunciation, intonation, and body language, thereby enhancing their perception of language use in real contexts [3]. For example, in the teaching of the "cross-cultural communication" theme, by playing videos of daily conversations in different countries, students can intuitively observe the differences in greeting methods and pragmatic habits, which makes it easier to understand the impact of cultural backgrounds on language expression than simply listening to audio.

3.2. The online teaching model focuses on autonomous learning and personalized teaching

Based on the results of learning situation analysis, a teaching plan of graded tasks and personalized paths is designed. Through the data analysis functions of platforms such as Superstar Learning and Rain Classroom, students' listening difficulties and learning preferences are accurately identified, and listening resources are divided into three levels: basic, intermediate, and advanced. Students can independently choose learning content according to their own proficiency levels, complete tasks corresponding to their levels, and the platform records learning progress and completion status in real time, pushing personalized extended exercises to students [4]. Meanwhile, a three-stage model of "pre-class preview, in-class interaction, and after-class extension" is constructed: pre-class, micro-lessons are used to guide students to preview core knowledge points and vocabulary; in-class, the focus is on difficult point analysis and interactive tasks; after-class, APPs such as BBC Learning English and VOA Special English are used to extend learning scenarios, realizing the organic combination of individualized listening teaching and autonomous inquiry.

3.3. The online teaching model provides background knowledge and cultivates students' cross-cultural communication competence

In teaching practice, for each listening material, relevant cultural background essays, documentary clips, and folk custom introductions are pushed through online platforms to help students understand the cultural elements, such as historical traditions and values behind the corpus. For example, when learning listening content related to Western festivals, videos about the origin and customs of Christmas and Thanksgiving are pushed simultaneously; when exposed to workplace English listening materials, etiquette norms for business communication in different countries are supplemented. At the same time, through organizing online interactive

activities such as cross-cultural theme discussions, film and television clip dubbing, and role-playing, students deepen their understanding of cultural differences in language practice and improve their listening comprehension and communication abilities in cross-cultural contexts [5]. Questionnaire surveys show that 75% of students believe that "supporting cultural background resources have significantly improved the accuracy of listening comprehension", and 68% of students said that cross-cultural interactive activities have enhanced their confidence in language application.

4. Constructing effective teaching models for English listening courses in independent colleges in the online environment

4.1. The flipped classroom teaching model based on micro-lessons

The flipped classroom teaching model, based on micro-lessons, realizes the teaching transformation of "student-centered" by reallocating the time between in-class and after-class. The implementation process of this model is divided into three stages:

4.1.1. Pre-class autonomous preview

Teachers make 5–10 minute micro-lesson videos around the core knowledge points of listening, supporting the push of preview task lists (such as vocabulary preview, predicting listening content, and initially completing simple exercises), which are released through the Superstar Learning platform. Students independently watch micro-lessons after class, complete preview tasks, and provide feedback on the difficult problems encountered in the message area of the platform. Teachers master students' preview situation through background data statistics and design targeted in-class teaching content.

4.1.2. In-class interactive deepening stage

Focusing on the common difficulties and key content in students' preview, interactive teaching is carried out. Firstly, real-time quizzes are conducted through Rain Classroom to test the preview effect; then group discussions are organized to exchange ideas on difficult problems; then multimodal interactive activities such as silent video prediction, listening material dubbing, and theme debates are carried out to strengthen students' understanding and application of listening content; finally, teachers conduct summary comments, sorting out listening strategies and cultural key points. For example, when explaining the "inference question solving strategies", students first learn the basic methods through micro-lessons, and then organize group cooperation analysis combined with listening materials in class to consolidate the application of strategies through interactive exercises.

4.1.3. After-class extension and improvement stage

According to students' in-class performance and quiz results, teachers push personalized extended resources and exercises, such as pushing micro-lessons on connected speech and weak form training for students with weak pronunciation, and pushing relevant documentaries for students with insufficient cultural understanding. After completing the extended tasks, students submit their homework through the platform, and teachers conduct online corrections and feedback. Meanwhile, students are encouraged to share learning experiences and resources on the platform, forming a mutual-aid learning community.

Empirical data show that in the experimental class adopting this model, the rate of in-class interactive

participation has increased from 45% in traditional classes to 82%. Students' mastery of listening strategies is significantly better than that of the control class, and their preview habits and autonomous learning abilities have been effectively cultivated.

4.2. The blended teaching model based on SPOC

SPOC (Small Private Online Course), with the characteristics of "limited audience, precise docking, and in-depth interaction", has become an effective carrier connecting online and offline teaching. The blended teaching model based on SPOC constructed in this study relies on the university-level cloud platform to build exclusive online courses around the core modules of listening courses, realizing the deep integration of online resource learning and offline classroom practice.

4.2.1. Construction of online SPOC courses

The course content is designed in a "modular" way, covering four core modules: phonetic foundation, discourse comprehension, strategy application, and cross-cultural listening. Each module includes sections such as micro-lesson videos, multimodal listening materials, exercise tests, discussion areas, and resource libraries. Online learning emphasizes autonomy and flexibility. Students can learn course content at any time according to their own progress, test learning effects through online tests, and communicate doubts and share insights with teachers and students in the discussion area. Teachers monitor students' learning behaviors (such as video watching duration, exercise accuracy rate, and number of discussion speeches) through platform data, accurately grasp students' learning status and weak links, and provide a basis for offline teaching.

4.2.2. Offline classroom practice

Offline teaching is centered on "task-driven", and targeted practical activities are designed based on online learning data. For example, for the "long and difficult sentence comprehension" question type with low accuracy rate in online tests, exercises on long and difficult sentence disassembly and synonym replacement are carried out; for cross-cultural topics concerned by students in the discussion area, listening practice activities simulating cross-cultural communication scenarios are organized; combined with multimodal materials learned online, task-based activities such as group cooperative listening reports and scenario interpretation are carried out. Meanwhile, interactive tools such as Rain Classroom are used to carry out real-time feedback activities, such as replaying listening material clips, real-time answer competitions, and mutual evaluation of strategy sharing, so as to improve the pertinence and interest of classroom teaching [6].

Practice has proved that the blended teaching model based on SPOC can give full play to the richness of online resources and the effectiveness of offline interaction, and effectively improve students' comprehensive listening abilities. In the post-test, the average listening score of the experimental class is 12. 3 points higher than that of the control class, and students' satisfaction with the listening course reaches 85%.

5. Conclusion

Aiming at the problems such as rigid teaching models, single resources, one-sided evaluation, and superficial application of technology in English listening courses for English majors in independent colleges, this study systematically explores effective teaching models for English listening courses based on the technical advantages of the online environment. By constructing a multimodal listening resource database and creating

two core teaching models of "micro-lessons+flipped classroom" and "SPOC+blended teaching", the study realizes the transformation of teaching models from "one-way input" to "interactive closed loop", teaching resources from standardization to personalization, and teaching evaluation from score orientation to competence orientation. Research practice shows that the new listening teaching model in the online environment can effectively enhance students' learning interest and classroom participation, improve their autonomous learning abilities, listening strategy application abilities, and cross-cultural communication abilities, and promote the improvement of teachers' digital teaching abilities, providing a feasible path for the reform of English listening teaching for English majors in independent colleges.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

[1]   Guo HQ, 2022, A Study on New English Teaching Methods in the Online Environment. Journal of Shanxi Datong University (Social Science Edition), 36(2): 118–121.

[2]   Zhu ZX, 2020, A Study on the Teaching Model of Cultivating English Autonomous Learning Ability of Higher Vocational Students in the Online Environment. English Square (Half Monthly), 2020(5): 75–77.

[3]   Huang XM, 2020, A Study on the Optimization of English Classroom Teaching for Vocational College Students in the Online Environment. Overseas English, 2020(3): 91–92.

[4]   Chen Q, 2017, Reconstruction of College English Classroom Ecological Teaching Model in the Network Information Environment. Chinese Teachers, 2017(2): 32.

[5]   Cheng L, 2020, A Practical Study on Schubert's Curriculum Goal Orientation in English Classes of Independent Colleges. Modern Vocational Education, 2020(49): 12–13.

[6]   Zou LW, 2021, A Study on the Construction of Flipped Classroom Teaching Model for English Majors in Independent Colleges—A Case Study of Advanced English Courses. The Science Education Article Collects, 2021(4): 185–186.