Research on the Reform of Assessment under the Blended Teaching Mode: Taking the Teaching Practice of English Stylistics in Guangdong Technology College as an Example

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Abstract: English Stylistics is provided as an elective course by the Business English major at Guangdong Technology College, whose evaluation mechanism significantly impacts how well students learn the language. A novel assessment model is put forth in this study with the intention of transforming from a single summative assessment to a combination of formative and summative assessment in light of the shortcomings of the current assessment methodology in the course. In order to take advantage of blended teaching and integrate the online and offline learning resources of English Stylistics, all-round reforms have been carried out at multiple levels, including teaching content, teaching methods, and assessment approaches. Therefore, a more reasonable and diversified assessment method has been adopted to more comprehensively reflect students' learning objectives and proficiency in foreign languages.

Keywords: Blended teaching; Assessment method; English Stylistics

1. Introduction

Blended teaching encompasses the integration of advanced educational concepts and technological tools, with the objective of enhancing both teaching quality and learning outcomes to accommodate the diverse needs of learners. In 1969, blended learning was initially presented as a fundamental part of the global principle distance learning instruction system. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the phrase "blended learning" was used to describe "a course designed to allow workers to both continue in the workplace and study" [1]. When the phrase originally appeared in English language teaching (ELT), it was used to describe any combination of in-person instruction and online learning [2]. Blended learning has the potential to improve the overall quality of educational experiences, make learning English more engaging and enjoyable, and increase student involvement in class. Students are encouraged to participate in online

learning assignments, which allows them to gain knowledge, improve learning outcomes, and enjoy the challenge of overcoming digital obstacles.

As an essential branch of linguistics, stylistics is an important tool for understanding and analyzing the characteristics of literary works and various texts. Moreover, stylistics is an open and comprehensive discipline motivated by research objectives [3]. The course's orientation, which primarily focuses on the stylistic characteristics of discourse, is rather explicit in terms of its research objectives. From the perspective of theoretical foundation, stylistics does not have an independent theoretical system, and it has extensively absorbed and borrowed the theoretical resources of many other disciplines, especially the core views and methodologies in the fields of literature, linguistics, and sociology.

Conventional offline teaching, that is, teacher-centered face-to-face teaching in physical classrooms, has been dominant for a long time in history, but its disadvantages are increasingly apparent. At present, the course of English Stylistics at Guangdong Technology College is actively exploring the transformation from the traditional teaching mode of "teacher-centered" to "student-centered" teaching mode. Nonetheless, in general, the course mainly faces the following challenges: single teaching mode, insufficient teaching facilities, incomplete assessment methods, etc., especially in assessment. As an important part of the teaching process, assessment plays a vital role in improving the teaching quality and teaching effect, and cannot be replaced by other teaching processes [4]. Therefore, it has become imperative for educators to conduct research on the assessment reform for English Stylistics so that students can grasp its fundamental theories, as well as enhance their practical skills.

2. The necessity of assessment reform of English Stylistics

English Stylistics, an elective course at Guangdong Technology College, has the potential to assess students' learning outcomes to a certain extent. Nevertheless, it also presents several drawbacks in terms of its assessment methods. The reliance on a single closed-book examination often put emphasis on the evaluation of students' memory and comprehension while overlooking the assessment of their analytical skills, critical thinking abilities, and innovative capacities. On the contrary, diversified process assessment is a teaching evaluation method that conducts all-round, multi-form, and multi-stage assessment for students' course learning process, so as to fully mobilize students' active initiative, comprehensively assess students' learning effect, and give immediate feedback to teachers' teaching effectiveness [5]. Consequently, this approach may encourage students to prioritize short-term memorization rather than fostering a genuine understanding and internalization of knowledge. Specifically, the primary challenges in evaluating English Stylistics are outlined as follows.

2.1. Conforming to the trend of education reform

The current educational reform highlights the cultivation of students' innovation capability and practical application ability. As an important course for students majoring in English, the traditional assessment method of English Stylistics may lay emphasis on the assessment of theoretical knowledge, and ignore the embodiment of students' practical application ability and innovation ability. Therefore, the reform of assessment is an inevitable choice to conform to the trend of education reform. Moreover, with the development of globalization and social economy, the social demand for English talents is paying more and more attention to practical application ability and innovation ability. The assessment reform can better reflect

this social demand and train more English talents to meet the needs of society.

2.2. Improving the comprehensive quality of students

Under the current background of English education, the traditional assessment of the English Stylistics curriculum tends to put too much emphasis on the examination of students' knowledge memory and theoretical mastery, but ignores the cultivation of students' practical application ability. The reform of assessment needs to give high priority to the evaluation of students' comprehensive quality, which can encourage students to pay more attention to practical application in the learning process and improve their ability of language expression, critical thinking, and innovative awareness. In order to improve the comprehensive quality of students, it is imperative to reform the examination method. Namely, the reform of the assessment means that it is no longer solely based on the written test results as the evaluation standard, but to focus on the evaluation of students' comprehensive quality.

2.3. Optimizing the evaluation system of the curriculum

The assessment reform can promote the evaluation system to be more comprehensive and scientific, focusing not only on students' test scores but also on process evaluation and ability evaluation, so as to evaluate students' academic achievements more comprehensively. Optimizing the evaluation system is an essential part of education reform, especially in the assessment reform of English Stylistics. In the traditional assessment mode, students' academic achievement is often simplified into examination results, which has obvious limitations. It cannot fully reflect the learning process of students, nor can it accurately measure the actual ability and learning potential of students. Therefore, one of the purposes of the assessment reform is to optimize the evaluation system and make it more comprehensive and scientific.

3. Pre-implementation plan for assessment reform of English Stylistics

According to Anthony *et al.*, accomplishment, engagement, involvement, retention, and cognitive results, all positively indicated how beneficial blended learning will be for students [6]. Given deficiencies in the previous assessment methods of curriculum English Stylistics mentioned above, the training objectives of the course serve as the foundation for this study, which also uses the Rain Classroom teaching platform as the teaching method, the blended teaching mode as the foundation, and the assessment of students' overall English proficiency as the primary objective, so as to integrate all teaching process and innovate the assessment methodology, that is, to adopt a diversified comprehensive assessment method: the organic combination of process assessment and final assessment. First and foremost, our course team has added a variety of assessment items while taking into account the characteristics of blended teaching, including online teaching video learning, project-based learning, group cooperation, and tests for each learning unit, so as to strengthen the effect of diversified process assessment. These measures can not only increase students' engagement in class but also promote their initiative and creativity in the learning process. Moreover, with the implementation of blended teaching, teachers are capable of stimulating students' self-directed learning, and they should observe students' learning process, especially students' engagement [7]. During this process, learning is no longer limited by time and space in traditional teaching methods, and the interaction between teachers and students, as well as between students, runs through the entire learning process. This constant interaction not only fosters collaboration and communication among students but also provides teachers with immediate feedback to help them adjust their teaching strategies in a timely manner to meet the needs of

their students. Finally, the final assessment has been reformed to take the form of a thesis to comprehensively assess students' overall English application ability, which aims to assess students' comprehension and application of learning content in a more comprehensive way and promote their all-round development in English learning. Meanwhile, the use of the Rain Classroom teaching platform also provides convenient technical support for this assessment method, making the assessment process more efficient and transparent. In the specific implementation plan of diversified assessment methods, the fairness and effectiveness of the assessment will be ensured through systematic evaluation standards and clear evaluation mechanisms, so as to motivate students to make continuous progress in language application. The implementation plan for the reform of the specific assessment method of the English stylistics course is detailed in **Table 1**.

3.1. Online teaching

Teachers will provide a pre-implementation score to students, which will make up 20% of the final score, based on their success on post-class assessments, completion of learning materials, and online video learning. The effective use of the platform can provide information support for the teaching process, and realize the standardized and scientific teaching management [8]. Specifically, teachers will use the Rain Classroom teaching platform to establish a systematic course structure, including the structure and content of each chapter, videos related to core concepts and theories, MOOC links, online tests, and other learning resources. After watching the lesson video, students need to complete the exercises that are pre-set by teachers and closely bound up with the course content on time. In order to effectively monitor students' learning progress and learning effectiveness, they are required to submit assignments to the platform the day before each class. After they submit their assignments to the platform, teachers will correct them one by one, evaluate the students' completion of the assignments, and check the accuracy of their answers. The feedback from these assignments not only helps teachers understand students' mastery of video teaching but also guides teachers to make necessary adjustments and optimizations to students' poor mastery in future lessons, so as to provide students with more targeted guidance. Class attendance accounts for 10% of the total grade.

Attendance is designed to assess students' participation in online and offline classes. To this end, our course team has adopted the check-in module of the Rain Classroom platform in order to record students' attendance more effectively. Students sign in by scanning the QR code in class, so that the accuracy and real-time attendance data are guaranteed. This semester, the English Stylistics course includes 16 online and offline classroom lessons, and students will receive full marks for signing up for 16 times. In this way, teachers are not only able to keep abreast of students' attendance but also motivate students to actively participate in classroom activities, thereby improving the effectiveness of classroom teaching.

3.2. Offline teaching

Classroom performance assessment: Teachers evaluate students' classroom performance by observing students' engagement in class, and the performance of group cooperation (accounting for 70%).

Group cooperation (accounting for 30%): Teachers are expected to divide students into different stylistic learning groups, and then guide them to group discussions on specific issues and cases related to the English Stylistics theory in class, so as to promote students' engagement in the class and enhance their sense of teamwork. Additionally, teachers are supposed to assign group assignments efficiently, encourage students to carry out a reasonable division of tasks among group members after class, and carefully complete the writing

of lectures and the production of PowerPoint. Williams and Burden put forth that "Learning is an active process in which learners construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world through action and reflection" [9], so teachers can provide constructive suggestions and guidance for students, and encourage students to give full play to their own main role and take the initiative to explore and solve problems during their presentation. After the students complete the group report, the teacher should focus on the following aspects of the overall performance of each group, that is, the completeness, comprehensiveness, innovation of the report content, and the ability of the group members to summarize. Through regular group presentations in class, students are able to deepen their understanding of these theories and improve their practical application skills.

Project-based learning (accounting for 30%): Students make stylistic analysis reports on a regular basis, and select a work from the designated literary bibliography for intensive research. Students are required to identify and analyze a variety of stylistic features in the work, including lexical choice, syntactic structure, as well as rhetorical devices, and write a detailed analysis report. In addition, teachers will actively guide students to conduct cross-genre comparative research in class teaching, encouraging them to conduct a comparative analysis of different genres and figure out the similarities and differences between different genres in terms of language use, structural arrangement, and rhetorical techniques. Through such activities, students are not only able to deepen their understanding of literary works but also enhance their analytical and critical thinking skills.

Homework (accounting for 10%): Teachers arrange an in-class test every two weeks in the classroom, and the content of the test should have a close relation with the knowledge learned by students, so as to help students evaluate their learning progress and proficiency promptly. Through regular quizzes, teachers can get timely feedback from students and adjust teaching strategies to better meet students' learning needs.

Table 1. Changes in assessment of English Stylistics before and after the reform

Reform items	Before the reform	After the reform
Teaching mode	Offline teaching	Blended teaching
Process assessment	Attendance (10%) Classroom performance (50%) Assignments (40%)	Project-based learning (30%) Group cooperation (30%) In-class test (10%) Online video learning (20%) Attendance (10%)
Final assessment	Closed book examination (60%)	Course paper (60%)

Note: The final examination grade is determined by the final course paper. Each item has a 100-point system. Content classification and proportion of process assessment (calculated by 100 points, converted at the end of the semester). *Total score (100) = Process assessment 40% + Final assessment 60%.

4. The expected results of assessment reform of English Stylistics

In order to have a more comprehensive evaluation of the effect of the implementation of the reform of the assessment method of English Stylistics, the course team plans to make a comparison of the average grades of students before and after the reform. Furthermore, we will conduct a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of the reform through various methods, which include random interviews with students and questionnaires. On the one hand, it is possible to observe the changes in students' academic performance

before and after the reform through comparative analysis, which will provide us with quantitative data support and enable us to judge whether the new assessment method has effectively improved students' learning outcomes. On the other hand, random interviews will provide us with more definitive qualitative data. Through face-to-face interaction with students, we can gain insight into how they really feel about the new assessment methods and the challenges they face in the learning process. This direct feedback contributes to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the reform so that we can make targeted improvements. Meanwhile, the questionnaire will allow us to collect a wider range of student opinions and suggestions. By designing a scientific and reasonable questionnaire, we can obtain multi-dimensional information about students' learning motivation, engagement, and satisfaction with the assessment method. The data mentioned above will provide us with a more comprehensive perspective and allow us to assess the overall impact of the reforms. The expected results of the specific reform are as follows.

There will be an obvious enhancement in students' overall academic performance and their ability to learn independently. Specifically, the overall performance of students will improve, with the proportion of excellent students increasing and the failure rate decreasing. Students will have a greater sense of self-directed learning and will no longer regard electives as an easy way to earn credits. Instead, they will place more emphasis on pre-class preparation, class engagement, and post-class review. Before the reform, many students reckoned that English Stylistics was only an elective course, so their class attendance and participation were not important, and they only needed to review before the end of the semester to get high grades. This concept has led to some students' absences in class and perfunctory homework, which has seriously affected the quality of teaching. The newly implemented diversified process assessment method has increased the proportion of ordinary results in the overall evaluation. Teachers have set up corresponding assessment items at all stages of the learning process, including watching online teaching videos, conducting interactive classroom questions and answers, project-based learning, group cooperation, as well as in-class quizzes. This all-round assessment system requires students to maintain active engagement in every aspect of learning, which greatly stimulates students' awareness of independent learning and prompts them to actively participate in the learning process.

There will be a significant improvement in the overall quality of classroom teaching and the comprehensive ability of students. Students' excitement and investment in classroom learning activities will be directly impacted by an uninteresting or improper introduction, which will also reduce their motivation and learning interest from the start. As a result, "teachers should understand students' actual needs on the basis of language learning characteristics and students' language proficiency" [10]. The reformed blended teaching model can increase the interaction between teachers and students, and encourage collaborative learning between students, thereby improving teaching effectiveness and students' engagement. Further, online resources can be shared and reused, reducing the workload of teachers. Teachers can then devote more energy to curriculum design, personalized tutoring, etc., thus improving the quality and efficiency of teaching. Before the reform, the assessment method of the curriculum mainly relied on the traditional examination form, which focused on the students' ability to recognize and memorize stylistic knowledge, and often failed to fully reflect the application ability of students. Given this, the course team has adjusted the form of the final examination from the original written examination to a course paper based on stylistic theory, which can more comprehensively examine students' comprehensive abilities, including information retrieval, data analysis, critical thinking, and writing skills. Students are required to consult relevant literature, analyze different stylistic features, and draw their own opinions from them. At the same time,

group cooperation and project-based learning are added, so that students can not only master theoretical knowledge in the learning process but also pay more attention to the improvement of practical English skills. Students are able to independently apply the stylistic theories they have learned to analyze and solve business problems, thus laying a solid foundation for future career development.

There will be an apparent increase in students' intercultural awareness and an overall improvement in their information literacy. English Stylistics is a discipline that attaches great importance to how language is used in different cultural contexts. Therefore, the introduction of project-based learning is designed to guide students to compare and analyze various stylistics in class, so that students can better understand the complexities and nuances of cross-cultural communication. Moreover, students need to analyze problems from multiple perspectives in cross-cultural studies and have a good grasp of the values, customs, and expressions in different cultural contexts, which is also beneficial for cultivating students' critical thinking, prompting them to consider problems from multiple perspectives, and reducing cultural biases. After the reform, the course paper will be considered as the main assessment method at the end of the semester. When writing the final paper, students are required to analyze the stylistic characteristics of language use in different cultural contexts in conjunction with specific cases. This approach allows them to explore the linguistic expressions under different cultural contexts and how these stylistic characteristics can reflect their social values. By analyzing the similarities and differences between different cultures, students are able to broaden their international horizons and enhance their understanding and tolerance of multiculturalism. In fact, students need to do a lot of literature research before writing. As they learn how to use library resources, academic databases, and online learning resources effectively, they are supposed to enhance their ability of information retrieval, which in turn improves students' information literacy.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the integration of online and offline blended teaching in the course English Stylistics represents an essential response to the advancements in Internet technology. Furthermore, it serves as a significant strategy for enhancing educational quality and fostering students' comprehensive abilities. By adopting this model, curriculum delivery can align more closely with contemporary educational trends while effectively addressing students' learning needs. The reform of assessment methods within this framework is paramount to the overall teaching transformation, permeating every aspect of the instructional process. For one thing, this assessment approach has evolved to become more comprehensive, reasonable, objective, and fair; for another, at each learning stage, students' self-directed learning ability is well cultivated, and students are encouraged to actively participate in the whole process of teaching, which effectively improves teaching efficiency.

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