

Research on Blended Teaching of English in Vocational Colleges

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Abstract: This paper first describes the concept and characteristics of blended teaching, and then analyzes the existing problems in vocational English teaching. Finally, from the perspective of the problems, it summarizes and puts forward the specific application of mixed teaching in vocational English teaching to provide an effective plan for the reform of vocational English teaching, enhance students' interest in English learning, and improve their overall proficiency in the language.

Keywords: Blended teaching; Vocational English; Application

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1. Overview of blended teaching

As the pioneer advocate of the blended teaching model in China, Professor Ho Kekang has influenced the domestic education field with a forward-looking perspective. In his opinion, the biggest difference between blended teaching and traditional education mode lies in its flexibility and frequent interaction. Combining traditional face-to-face teaching and online learning maximizes the advantage and overcomes the shortcomings of both teaching modes. Besides, it empowers teachers to play a pivotal role in guiding, inspiring, and monitoring the teaching process while fully embracing the student-centered teaching concept. This emphasis on student-centered learning is crucial for enhancing teaching effectiveness and learning efficiency.

The rapid development of information technology, especially the Internet, and the rise of massive open online courses (MOOCs) provide a broader platform for blended teaching^[2]. MOOCs not only effectively transcend regional barriers, granting students from diverse locations equal access to quality education, but their emergence and growth also compel the reform of traditional teaching modes towards greater efficiency and inclusivity. In this transformative journey, flipped classrooms have emerged as a potent tool to augment the learning outcomes facilitated by MOOCs. In this process, flipped classrooms have emerged as a powerful means to enhance the learning effect of MOOCs. The essence of flipped classrooms lies in the close combination of online learning and offline discussion. It requires students to independently educational videos prepared by the teacher in advance and then bring the remaining questions to the classroom for further discussions. This shift is conducive to maximizing students' learning outcomes, fully engaging their initiative and enthusiasm for

learning, and ultimately achieving the goal of deep learning ^[3].

2. Main problems in English teaching in higher vocational colleges

2.1. Backward educational concept

The rapid development of society necessitates the development of practical technical talents. As the primary source of such talents, higher vocational colleges must strengthen all aspects of their curriculum, particularly the English subject, by prioritizing the development of students' English proficiency. However, some English teachers in higher vocational colleges still adhere to traditional education concepts and have some misconceptions about English teaching. They often focus on grammar and vocabulary instruction while neglecting the cultivation of fluency and application. Furthermore, some English instructors are unclear about the primary goal of English teaching and fail to recognize the essential connection between English education and students' career trajectories. The lack of integration between teaching content, practical skills, and teaching methods means that students often acquire theoretical knowledge without developing the problem-solving abilities necessary for practical application ^[4]. As educators lag behind the demands of the contemporary era and overlook students' individual differences, students' diverse learning needs are not met. Consequently, students find it challenging to enhance their English proficiency, hindering the cultivation of their vocational abilities.

2.2. Outdated content

The shortcomings of English teaching content in higher vocational colleges are evident in the disconnect between course content and societal demands, industry standards, and international perspectives. At times, the teaching content lacks innovation and fails to incorporate the latest real-time information such as international exchanges and industry developments, thereby failing to meet the needs of students who will utilize English in their future careers. Additionally, some English teaching materials in higher vocational colleges tend to emphasize theoretical knowledge over the cultivation of communication skills, cross-cultural communication abilities, and vocational skills essential for practical work. This oversight may result in students' abilities falling short of the actual requirements of the workplace, even after completing their studies ^[5].

2.3. Singular teaching mode

Currently, English teaching in higher vocational colleges often adheres to a traditional teacher-centered approach, where students passively receive knowledge. This can result in low initiative and enthusiasm among students to participate in class, leading to a subdued learning atmosphere. Moreover, a range of flexible and diverse teaching methods, such as scenario simulation, project-based learning, cooperative learning, and blended teaching, are rarely utilized or are implemented at inappropriate times in English classes. This directly impacts the overall quality of English teaching and hampers the overall improvement of students' English proficiency ^[6].

3. Application of blended teaching in English teaching in higher vocational colleges

3.1. English course design in higher vocational colleges

In the design of a vocational English course, teachers should carefully analyze the characteristics of each unit's content and categorize vocational English courses into four types: theoretical, practical, lecturing, and self-learning. This categorization is based on the importance of cultivating various professional talents, thereby better aligning with students' actual learning needs ^[7]. Theoretical and lecturing classes primarily focus on

teachers imparting theoretical knowledge, often covering listening skills, grammar rules, practical writing, and other key knowledge areas. Teachers must meticulously plan and design English classes, systematically conveying knowledge to solidify students' language foundations and establish a robust theoretical framework for their future English practice. Conversely, practical and self-learning classes predominantly entail online interaction and discussions. Guided by modern teaching concepts, activities such as watching videos and engaging in reading and listening exercises are conducive to deepening students' understanding and application abilities, laying a strong foundation for their lifelong learning. The theoretical knowledge within this unit is primarily taught through traditional methods, focusing on listening skills, grammar, and practical writing. Practical and autonomous learning aspects are emphasized through online teaching methods, which include videos, reading assignments, and listening exercises ^[8]. By implementing targeted and practical online assessments, students' learning outcomes can be promptly evaluated. These assessments serve as valuable feedback mechanisms for both students and teachers. Teachers can monitor students' learning progress based on the test results, allowing them to adjust teaching strategies as needed. Furthermore, these results serve as important criteria for determining students' final grades.

3.2. Implementation of blended teaching in higher vocational college English education

In blended teaching mode, teachers assume a role distinct from that of traditional "lecturers." Here, teachers function more as mentors and guides, supporting students on their learning journey. They are tasked not only with imparting knowledge but also with assisting students in achieving high-quality learning outcomes. Students take on a leading role, becoming the focal point and driving force of the classroom, actively contributing to the construction of the knowledge system. Typically, teachers are responsible for designing teaching tasks and disseminating them through online teaching platforms. Simultaneously, they engage in real-time online communication with students, enabling them to promptly gauge students' grasp of the content and identify any areas of confusion, thus allowing for targeted adjustments and guidance. Meanwhile, students engage in independent learning and exchange learning experiences with their peers, further enhancing their self-management and independent learning abilities ^[9].

In formal classes, students are encouraged to actively pose questions and present their homework results. Teachers provide targeted evaluations to effectively address the challenges and issues encountered by students during independent learning. This approach is crucial for fully stimulating students' interest in the English language.

(1) Teacher module

The teacher module can be further subdivided into two components: the classroom module and the online module. In the classroom module, the primary responsibility of teachers is to address students' inquiries and engage in comprehensive and in-depth communication with them. Additionally, teachers assess students' homework and continually monitor their learning progress through periodic evaluations. Moreover, teachers should consistently emphasize key concepts and address areas of difficulty during class sessions to facilitate the internalization of knowledge. For instance, in Unit 1, "The Working World," the teaching focus is on "Useful Expressions Used in the Workplace." During class, students can engage in group discussions to achieve the instructional objective of digesting key knowledge points ^[10].

Currently, online English teaching takes various forms, including but not limited to online courses (MOOCs), micro-lessons, PowerPoint presentations (PPT), and videos. Teachers can design purpose-specific videos for students to watch online and discuss freely offline after class. For instance, the

two teaching videos in Unit 1, “Video Watching: May I Learn About Your Job?” and “Introduce Your Job,” are valuable resources for online learning and offline discussions ^[11]. Teachers can deliver key teaching content to students through micro-lessons to enhance their focus. PPT presentations are widely used by teachers, and it is essential to simplify the content to ensure that students grasp the key points accurately. Additionally, teachers can conduct online Q&A sessions and provide guidance through platforms like WeChat and QQ to address students’ difficulties promptly.

(2) Student module

The student module can be divided into two parts, namely the classroom module and the online module. In the classroom module, students can internalize knowledge through classroom learning. In the classroom module, students engage in knowledge internalization through in-class learning experiences. Learning should extend beyond the theoretical realm of textbooks, fostering deep reflection and hands-on application, which significantly enhances the quality of learning. For instance, following the study of “Workshop 1: A Day in the Life of,” students should move beyond reliance on the textbook, organizing language and addressing key questions. Teachers can prompt students to elaborate on the main ideas of the text and engage in open discussions on topics such as “the importance of work for personal growth.” This process effectively cultivates students’ comprehensive understanding, critical thinking, and creative expression skills ^[12].

In the online module, teachers should provide students with a curated list of online learning resources as a guide for their independent study. Based on the content outlined in the learning list, students can access teaching videos, PowerPoint presentations, micro-lessons, and other multimedia materials independently. However, online autonomous learning should not occur in isolation; rather, it should be interactive. Teachers can encourage students to engage in in-depth discussions or practice sessions with both teachers and classmates through online platforms or offline interactions following video viewing or studying materials. This approach is conducive to enhancing students’ comprehension of the unit’s teaching content. For instance, the reading passage “Take the Stress out of Phoning” in this unit can serve as material for independent online learning. Teachers can upload corresponding learning resources to a shared platform, enabling students to complete online independent learning tasks at their convenience ^[13].

3.3. Teaching evaluation

In the past, teachers typically relied on traditional methods to assess students’ English proficiency, combining regular scores (including homework completion and attendance) with test scores to determine final grades. However, this evaluation approach has several drawbacks. Test scores may not always accurately reflect students’ true English proficiency, and homework assignments may sometimes involve dishonest behaviors such as plagiarism, leading to unfair evaluation outcomes ^[14]. Therefore, with the introduction of blended teaching, teachers should undertake a comprehensive review and innovative reform of the evaluation system, aiming to establish a comprehensive and equitable assessment framework. Following the reform, specific grading components and their respective proportions are adjusted as follows: mid-term and final exam scores account for 40%, with the proportion decreased to alleviate the pressure of relying solely on exam results to gauge teaching effectiveness and student learning quality. The weight of online learning outcomes is increased to 30%, encompassing students’ engagement with materials and performance on online assessments. This reform enables teachers to monitor students’ learning progress comprehensively and provide timely feedback, leading to a more accurate measurement of students’ learning effectiveness. Additionally, classroom participation

and homework scores constitute 30% of the evaluation system. This component primarily evaluates students' participation in class interactions and their contributions to group discussions, thereby enhancing the role of classroom engagement in the evaluation process ^[15].

4. Conclusion

Blended teaching involves utilizing the internet as a medium in the teaching process, seamlessly integrating online and offline instruction to create a student-centered learning environment. It represents a crucial direction for reforming English teaching in higher vocational colleges. This paper has focused on the application of blended teaching in English instruction within higher vocational colleges, aiming to ignite students' enthusiasm for learning English and ultimately cultivate more English professionals who are attuned to the demands of contemporary society.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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