

Reform Paths of College English Course Teaching in the Digital Age

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Abstract: With the rapid development of digital technology, the teaching mode of English courses in colleges and universities is facing profound changes and challenges. This paper takes the significance of the reform of English course teaching in colleges and universities in the digital era as the starting point and aims at the problems existing in the teaching concept, digital teaching infrastructure, and digital literacy of the teaching staff in the current construction of English courses in colleges and universities. It proposes strategies such as changing teaching thinking, strengthening infrastructure construction and resource integration, and improving the digital ability of the teaching staff, which provides some references for promoting the modernization transformation of English course teaching in colleges and universities in China.

Keywords: Higher education; English courses; Digital reform

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1. Introduction

With the rapid development of information technology, digital technology is penetrating the education system at an unprecedented speed and depth, which has had a strong impact on the traditional model of English teaching in colleges and universities ^[1]. In this context, exploring the path of reforming college English courses is not only an inevitable choice to cope with the changes of the times, but also an important task to improve teaching quality and realize the modernization of higher education. Although digital teaching models are gradually emerging, how to effectively integrate digital technology with teaching content and how to break through the limitations of traditional teaching models are still core issues that need to be solved ^[2]. As an important platform for cultivating international talents, the significance of the reform of college English courses lies in improving the effectiveness of language teaching, but also in providing students with a more diversified and interactive learning experience through the application of information technology, to better adapt to the various challenges in the process of globalization.

This paper examines the digitalization background and the current status of English course construction

in colleges and universities, exploring reform paths in the digital age to provide a reference for English course development in Chinese higher education institutions in the new era.

2. The significance of college English course teaching reform in the digital era

2.1. Implementing the inherent requirements of higher education to cultivate morality and cultivate people

The diverse characteristics of digital teaching provide a more flexible teaching method for college English courses, allowing moral education and value guidance to be more vividly and concretely integrated into the teaching process. Through multimedia, network resources, virtual reality, and other technologies, teachers can convey complex language knowledge and cultural backgrounds to students more vividly and intuitively. This teaching method can enhance students' learning interest and participation, and at the same time, it can subtly guide students to understand and respect the diversity of different countries and cultures while learning the English language and cultivate their global vision and cross-cultural understanding ability ^[3].

2.2. Improving the quality of English courses in colleges and universities

The digital teaching environment has greatly enriched the diversity and accessibility of teaching resources, laying a solid foundation for improving the teaching quality of English courses in colleges and universities. The widespread application of digital technology, especially the development of Internet technology, has greatly expanded English teaching resources. Rich digital resources such as online courses, e-books, virtual libraries, and open educational resources have not only greatly broadened the teaching material choices of teachers, but also provided students with personalized learning resources ^[4]. The diversity and richness of resources can better meet the needs of students at different learning levels and effectively improve the overall teaching effect.

2.3. The only way to build a world-class university in the new era

Digital teaching reform has enabled college English courses to adapt more flexibly to the needs of the times and promoted the modernization and internationalization of course content. The construction of world-class universities needs to keep pace with the times, and English courses, as international common language courses, should reflect changes in global education trends and social needs. The introduction of digital means has made the teaching content of college English courses more diversified, covering the latest developments and global issues in international relations, the globalized economy, and climate change in contemporary society. The introduction of these contents allows students to master the latest language knowledge and gain an in-depth understanding of complex issues in the context of globalization during course learning, thus cultivating their ability to solve global problems ^[5]. Graduates with such abilities are undoubtedly high-end talents needed by the global market, which can significantly enhance the international reputation of colleges and universities and further promote the construction of world-class universities.

3. Problems in the construction of college English courses in the digital age

3.1. Traditional teaching concepts need to be promptly reformed

In the digital age, the shortcomings of traditional teaching concepts have gradually been revealed during the

process of English curriculum development in colleges and universities, becoming one of the main obstacles to teaching reform and innovation. Traditional concepts rely too much on the teacher-centered one-way knowledge transfer model, emphasizing the authority of classroom lectures and the inculcation of knowledge, and ignoring the status of students as the main body of learning. Teachers usually play the role of knowledge transmitters in the classroom, and students passively accept information and lack opportunities for independent thinking and active interaction. The teacher-led teaching model reinforces the traditional roles between teachers and students, limits students' initiative and creativity, and contradicts the concepts of autonomous and collaborative learning promoted in the digital age.

The high reliance on traditional teaching concepts on fixed textbooks and teaching content has also exacerbated this problem. For a long time, the teaching materials of English courses in colleges and universities have mostly been based on designated textbooks, with relatively fixed content, and the teaching process strictly follows the chapter structure of the textbooks. This has ensured the systematicity and coherence of the course to a certain extent, but it has shown a lack of flexibility in dealing with the ever-changing digital education environment. The content of textbooks is slowly updated and cannot reflect the latest developments in the international community and global language culture promptly. In the digital age, learning resources are diverse and updated rapidly, which can better meet the diverse learning needs of students. However, the high reliance on traditional teaching concepts in textbooks has made it difficult for teachers to effectively use the rich digital resources, and the gap between course content and students' actual needs has gradually widened, hindering the improvement of course quality.

3.2. Lack of digital teaching infrastructure and teaching resources

Many colleges and universities have insufficient investment in hardware facilities, resulting in infrastructure that is unable to meet the needs of digital teaching. Some schools' teaching buildings and classrooms still lack modern multimedia equipment such as high-definition projectors, smart whiteboards, and fast and stable network connections, which seriously limits teachers' effective use of digital technology to teach in the classroom. Especially in remote areas or colleges with limited funds, the lag in information infrastructure construction is more obvious, and it is impossible to provide students with sufficient digital learning support. The lack of technical facilities makes it difficult for teachers to flexibly apply digital tools in the classroom and also limits students' independent learning and access to extracurricular resources, which ultimately affects English teaching overall.

The lack of digital teaching resources is also a problem that cannot be ignored. Although with the development of information technology, digital learning platforms, online course resources, etc. have gradually increased, there is still a serious shortage of high-quality digital resources in many college English courses. English teaching requires rich and diverse language materials such as videos, audio, interactive exercises, simulated dialogues, etc., but these resources are difficult to systematically develop and integrate under limited school funds and technical support. Many schools can still rely on traditional textbooks and supporting courseware, lacking sufficient digital language resources, resulting in limited depth and breadth of digital teaching. In addition, some existing digital resources also have problems in quality and applicability. The resources provided by many platforms are relatively single, and it is difficult to cover all aspects of listening, speaking, reading, and writing involved in English learning. Moreover, some resources do not fully match the course syllabus or teaching objectives and cannot be effectively integrated into classroom teaching. The lack and inapplicability of resources directly affect the teachers' lessons, and they cannot fully utilize the

advantages of digital technology to improve the interactivity and practicality of English teaching.

3.3. The digital literacy and capabilities of the teaching staff need to be improved

Many college English teachers are not proficient in digital teaching tools and technologies and cannot use systematic technology, which directly affects the effectiveness of teachers' use of digital technology in the classroom. Although modern educational technology is changing with each passing day, online education platforms, virtual learning environments, multimedia tools, etc. are emerging in an endless stream, but some teachers are still limited to traditional teaching methods in actual teaching, and it is difficult to effectively integrate digital resources for course design and teaching practice. When some teachers use multimedia equipment in the classroom, they are limited to playing PowerPoint presentations (PPTs) or showing simple pictures and videos, lacking in-depth application of interactive functions and personalized learning support tools. Although the form of classroom teaching has changed, it is still essentially a teacher-centered knowledge transfer, and students' participation and learning effects have not been significantly improved.

The teaching staff generally has the challenge of insufficient adaptability when facing the digital teaching environment. Some teachers have a low degree of acceptance of digital technology, especially for more complex digital platforms and teaching software, and lack sufficient confidence and motivation to try to apply them. The digital age requires teachers to have strong subject knowledge, master various information technologies and teaching tools, and be able to guide students to carry out independent learning in an information environment. This role change has put forward higher requirements for teachers, but some teachers still maintain traditional teaching thinking in terms of concepts, are accustomed to relying on a one-way classroom teaching model, and lack the willingness and ability to actively use digital tools. The outdated concepts make it difficult for teachers to fully utilize the teaching advantages brought by digital technology, limiting the improvement of English course teaching effectiveness.

4. Reform strategies for English course teaching in colleges and universities in the digital era

4.1. Change the traditional teaching thinking and actively establish the concept of digital teaching

Through systematic training and updating of educational concepts, teachers should be helped to fully understand and master the basic characteristics and advantages of digital teaching. Teaching seminars, special lectures, and training courses can be held regularly to enable teachers to deeply understand the application of information technology in teaching. This is the application of technical means and the innovation of teaching thinking mode. Teachers should be guided to establish a student-centered teaching concept, break the traditional teacher-centered teaching model, and make full use of digital technology to achieve the interactivity, personalization, and flexibility of the teaching process so that students can get effective guidance and feedback from teachers while learning independently. Colleges and universities can create teaching demonstration courses or digital teaching experimental classes and other projects to encourage teachers to personally practice digital teaching models, accumulate practical experience and gradually change their way of thinking.

Colleges and universities should create an open and inclusive academic atmosphere, encourage teachers to actively accept the challenges of new technologies in teaching concepts, and effectively integrate them into

the teaching process. This process can be promoted by establishing an incentive mechanism to encourage teachers to innovate teaching and explore new digital teaching models. To this end, a teaching innovation award or curriculum reform project fund should be established to support teachers' innovative practices in curriculum design, teaching methods, and evaluation methods. Teachers can work with information technology experts and educational technology teams through interdisciplinary cooperation to develop teaching resources that meet the needs of the course and promote the digital transformation of teaching design. Simultaneously, teaching evaluation standards must also keep pace with the times. They should not only be based on traditional knowledge transfer as the basis for evaluation but should also consider more how teachers use digital means to improve students' learning effects and participation in the teaching process. The two-way interactive incentive mechanism and evaluation system can allow teachers to gradually establish a new concept of digital teaching subtly.

4.2. Promote the construction of digital teaching infrastructure and integrate digital teaching resources

In terms of infrastructure construction, colleges and universities should carry out comprehensive planning and investment according to actual needs to ensure the compatibility and advancement of hardware facilities and software systems. Priority can be given to improving the configuration of smart classrooms so that they are equipped with modern multimedia equipment and high-speed network connections to ensure the seamless use of digital tools in classroom teaching. Additionally, the network infrastructure on campus should be further strengthened to ensure the breadth and depth of wireless network coverage, so that teachers and students can smoothly use network resources for teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom. Regarding the requirements for network bandwidth, especially when it is necessary to support large-scale online teaching or hybrid teaching, schools must ensure its stability and speed to avoid affecting the quality of teaching due to technical problems.

In terms of resource integration, colleges and universities should actively promote inter-school and international resource sharing to break the resource limitations of a single institution or a single discipline. By establishing a cross-school cooperation platform, colleges and universities can share high-quality teaching resources with other institutions and promote the maximum utilization of resources. In English course teaching, cross-cultural and cross-language learning resources are crucial to improving students' language application ability. International resource integration can enrich teaching content and help improve the internationalization level of teaching. Colleges and universities can cooperate with internationally renowned educational institutions, use their platforms and resources, introduce world-leading teaching content and teaching tools, and provide students with more learning opportunities and experiences. Schools should also encourage teachers to participate in the global Open Educational Resources (OER) program, and use open courses and educational resources in the context of globalization to further enrich the course content of their schools.

4.3. Strengthen teacher training and improve the digital literacy and capabilities of the teaching staff

Schools should set up special digital training programs for teachers, and help teachers master the use of digital teaching tools and platforms through multi-level and multi-form training models. Training can be conducted in a combination of online and offline methods, which not only ensures that teachers have flexible learning time,

but also allows them to interact and answer questions with technical experts through face-to-face practical operations. The training content should include the production of multimedia courseware, the operation of online teaching platforms, the application of data analysis tools, etc., to ensure that teachers can skillfully use technical tools to support daily teaching activities. Teachers should also learn how to use artificial intelligence technology for teaching evaluation, real-time feedback, and learning behavior analysis, to provide students with personalized teaching support.

The training content should be designed differently according to the different needs and levels of teachers to ensure that all teachers can give full play to the role of digital tools in their respective teaching areas. For teachers with less technical experience, basic skills training is crucial, and step-by-step operational guidance can help them build confidence and ability in digital teaching tools. For teachers who already have certain technical capabilities, colleges and universities should provide more advanced courses such as learning data analysis and educational technology design to help them further master how to use big data to analyze students' learning behaviors, optimize teaching strategies, and improve classroom interactivity and student participation through innovative teaching designs. Training should also focus on practical applications. Through case teaching, simulated teaching scenarios, and other methods, teachers can directly apply the digital technologies they have learned to the course to ensure that training is closely integrated with teaching practice.

5. Conclusion

Future college English teaching reforms should continue to deepen innovation under the impetus of the digital wave while taking into account the essential requirements of technology and education. Only by adhering to the original intention of education, flexibly using technology, and continuously optimizing teaching practices can we cultivate high-quality talents who can adapt to the challenges of globalization in the educational environment of the new era and contribute to the construction of world-class universities and the future of global education.

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