

A Study on the Effectiveness of Blended Learning Mode in College English

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Abstract. With the arrival of the era of big data, information technology has greatly promoted the development of education, accelerated the transformation and innovation of educational mode. blended learning, which combines traditional classroom teaching and online learning, has become the mainstream mode of foreign language teaching in Universities in China. However, many problems arise in the process of blended learning in College English, which affects the effectiveness of blended learning and the achievement of teaching objectives. This study points out the possible problems in blended learning from both teachers' and students' perspective, and puts forward some strategies to improve the effectiveness of blended learning from the perspective of instructional design, teaching resources and learning evaluation.

1 Introduction

The unprecedented development of network technology in the information era places the whole society under the background of big data. With the arrival of this new era, information technology has greatly promoted the development of education, accelerated the transformation and innovation of educational mode, and promoted the improvement of teaching quality and the cultivation of high-quality talents. In this context, as an important part of humanistic education in colleges and universities, foreign language education has also ushered in a new round of reform. Since the 1990's, e-learning, referring to the way of learning through the Internet, has been rapidly applied and developed in the field of education, which has triggered a debate on whether universities with walls would be replaced by universities without walls. However, after nearly ten years of practice, experts believe that e-learning can achieve some educational goals well, but it cannot replace the traditional classroom teaching, which laid the foundation for the proposal and popularity of Blending Learning[1]. The decline of the MOOC boom in 2014 proves that the single online learning mode also has its drawbacks. In response to the shortcomings of the single mode, blended learning, which combines face-to-face teaching with online learning, has developed rapidly in the world.

2 Blended Learning

Blended Learning originally refers to the combination of various learning methods. He Kekang (2004) pointed out that after entering the 21st century, with the popularization of the Internet and the development of e-learning, blended learning has been endowed with a new meaning on the basis of its original connotation. The so-called Blending Learning is to combine the advantages of traditional learning methods with those of e-Learning (i.e., digital or networked learning). That is to say, teachers should not only play a leading role in guiding, inspiring and monitoring the teaching process, but also fully motivate students' initiative, enthusiasm and creativity as the main body of the learning process[2]. Li Kedong (2004) defines blended learning as a blend of online learning and face-to-face learning[3]. On the surface, it is a mixture of two kinds of teaching forms. On the deeper level, it is a mixture of teaching modes based on different teaching theories, a mixture of teachers' leading activities and students' participation, a mixture of classroom teaching and online learning environment, a mixture of different teaching media, and a mixture of classroom teaching and virtual classroom or virtual communities. Through combining face-to-face education with computer-based education, blended learning optimizes and integrates various course resources, realizes individualized learning and improves students' thinking ability.

Currently, blended learning has become the mainstream mode of foreign language teaching in Universities in China. Although a large number of researches have shown that this teaching mode can help to solve the contradiction between the limited capacity of traditional classroom teaching and students' individualized learning needs, and can also promote learners' learning interest and self-learning ability, how to effectively integrate face-to-face learning and web-based learning, optimize the existing blended learning mode and improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning is still an important issue in the current foreign language teaching reform.

3 Problems in the Blended Learning Mode in College English

At present, blended learning has become the mainstream mode of foreign language teaching in universities in China. Whether it is flipped classroom or micro-lecture or MOOC, it is a reform to break the traditional teaching mode, in order to improve learning efficiency, stimulate students' interest in learning and consolidate teaching content. However, many problems arise in the process of blended learning in College English, which affects the effectiveness of blended learning and the achievement of teaching objectives.

3.1 From the Teacher's Perspective

Teachers, as the leading role in the teaching process, take a significant part. Their teaching methods, teaching ability, academic level and so on all determine the quality of teaching. Blended learning mode emphasizes teaching activities as the center, requiring teachers not only to be good at traditional classroom teaching, to realize teaching and discussion, interaction and communication based on knowledge in textbook, but also to be

familiar with the use of online teaching platform. Teachers are supposed to be able to switch and complement the two teaching environments and solve the problems in teaching through the optimization and implementation of teaching design.

At present, in the process of organizing blended learning, some teachers simply put the teaching materials on the online teaching platform for students to learn by themselves which make the learning stay at the shallow level. There is a lack of diversity in teaching methods and the teaching is disjointed with students' needs which results in learners' lack of learning experience and makes it difficult to achieve individualized learning independently. In addition, some teachers fail to fully develop the course resources. They don't organize and design the learning content carefully. Resources are just stacked there online with no channels for students' feedback, which makes the course less appealing and leads to low utilization rate of the course resources. At the same time, redundant information in learning resources will increase students' cognitive load and interfere with learning effect.

3.2 From the Student's Perspective

Students are the main participants in the process of teaching. For students who are accustomed to the traditional classroom learning mode, the blended learning mode breaks their traditional cognition of learning. On the one hand, they are curious about the new learning mode, on the other hand, there are also cases of inadaptability. Lacking guidance from teachers to motivate students' learning initiative, it is easy for students to convert from a state of autonomy to a state of self-indulgence. In addition, due to the lack of consideration of the differences of students' background of knowledge reserve and learning experience and the complexity of learning tasks, the teaching effect is also affected by employing blended learning mode to all students without distinction.

4 Strategies for Improving the Effectiveness of Blended Learning Mode

Blended learning in College English is not an end, but a means to achieve the teaching effects. Therefore, the effectiveness of teaching is the criterion to measure the success of blended learning mode. The key to effective learning lies in realizing students' subjective learning and teachers' leading role, and fully mobilizing students' learning initiative and creativity.

It is based on the online teaching platform and is under the guidance of blended learning theory, constructive learning theory and modern instructional design theory. And there are four stages during the learning process: cognition of knowledge, internalization of knowledge, knowledge expansion and knowledge transfer. During these four stages, this learning mode combines online and offline elements such as high quality learning resources, diversified learning activities, personalized learning strategies, deeply interactive learning communities and multiple learning evaluation to achieve the effectiveness of blended learning in College English.

4.1 Instructional Design

In the blended learning mode, teacher's leading role and student's subjectivity are the core of the whole link. It is necessary to do a good job of curriculum design in advance and fully prepare all kinds of resources needed for online and offline teaching in order to help students effectively carry out independent learning. In addition, teachers should fully consider the differences of learners' background of knowledge reserve and learning experience, the complexity of learning tasks, and the level of information technology in their teaching design, and adopt corresponding strategies to reduce students' cognitive load .

Firstly, in order to have a more detailed understanding of the differences of learners' learning background, teachers can make a comprehensive analysis of learning situation before teaching design, including learner analysis, learning needs analysis, analysis of learning content, learning purpose and learning environment. Instructional designers can also conduct English proficiency tests before the beginning of the course. According to the test results, students with different English language proficiency can enter different stages of course learning. Through graded teaching, teachers can provide staged and differentiated College English teaching, so that the teaching can be adapted to students' language proficiency and help students reduce their cognitive load.

Secondly, on the basis of the analysis of the learning situation, teachers should do a good job in teaching design and fully prepare all kinds of resources needed for online and offline teaching. Teaching tasks can be organized into several modules according to the structure of knowledge, and independent knowledge points can be organized as learning units respectively. Learners are expected to complete autonomous learning of knowledge points and concepts in extra-curricular time. And traditional classroom teaching will focus on answering questions raised by students, doing reports and conducting discussions, supplemented by online learning and group interactive learning. Through mutual cooperation, it is more conducive to students' autonomous learning.

Thirdly, the arrangement of teaching process should also be considered in teaching design. For example, at the beginning of the course, learners will be informed of the arrangement of learning, such as how long the course will last, how many online meetings there will be, how long the face-to-face instruction will last, how many tests they will take, how many assignments they should submit and so on. In the process of learning, teachers should remind students of the units they are going to learn, and assignments or tests they should complete by e-mail and regular online meetings. Learners usually want to have a good learning arrangement and more guidance. Learners themselves do not magically become scientific explorers or investigators[4]. Moderately structured teaching process can make learning process easier and make learning a routine or habit of life, thus ensuring the effect of learning.

4.2 Teaching Resources

Teaching resources include not only curriculum resources such as professional knowledge and online learning platform, but also learning materials of teachers and students in the process of teaching. Faced with a large number of teaching resources, teachers should obtain the ability to deal with the rich information. They should learn how to make electronic courseware by using modern office software, video and animation technology. They can also use resources from the Internet, combined with traditional teaching information to realize the diversification of information resources. At the same time, teachers should integrate and optimize these learning resources, redevelop learning content, design learning tasks rationally, so that to avoid the overload of learners' cognition caused by the complexity and difficulty of learning tasks, which invisibly increases the internal cognitive load, and has a negative impact on the learning effect. When necessary, teachers can reorganize the curriculum content and allocate learning resources reasonably to help students better accept, understand and master these learning resources.

4.3 Learning Evaluation

Learning evaluation is an important link in the process of blended learning in College English, which runs through the whole teaching process. How to evaluate teaching and learning more accurately and objectively is an important indicator for evaluating teaching mode and teaching effect. Therefore, it is necessary to track the learner's learning process, analyze the learning results, and evaluate learners more comprehensively and accurately in an all-round way, and establish a diversified evaluation system. In the process of learning evaluation, we should consider the links and contents of learning activities comprehensively, adopt flexible and diverse evaluation methods, and set up an evaluation mechanism that is conducive to guiding learners to achieve teaching objectives with a definite aim. Such a learning evaluation system can help to strengthen teachers' sense of responsibility, adjust teaching strategies in time, and supervise and guide learners more effectively. The evaluation criteria should take some aspects into consideration, such as teachers and students' satisfaction with learning results, the improvement of self-learning ability, the satisfaction of teaching methods, the improvement of innovative awareness and innovative ability[5].

The evaluation methods can be flexible and diverse. It can be assessment of learning made by teachers, evaluation of teaching made by students, group view or self-evaluation by students themselves. The traditional teaching evaluation is mainly based on the scores of students' classroom performance, experiment, quiz and examination. On the basis of traditional evaluation, the teaching evaluation system under the blended learning mode can also incorporate the performance of network interaction, learning progress, individual report, achievement evaluation, group discussion and interactive activity into the scoring criteria, which can not only enable students to have a better understanding of their own characteristics, thus formulating more scientific learning strategies, but also make this multidimensional evaluation more objective and accurate, which is conducive to motivating students' learning. In addition, the formative evaluation of learning process should be

emphasized. The enthusiasm of online and offline learning, the improvement of learning ability and the ability of cooperation and interaction with peers should be paid attention to.

5 Conclusion

In the information era, the advantages of blended learning are obvious. But if teachers only play electronic courseware on the online teaching platform, without designing the teaching process, homework and test, and if teachers still give priority to lectures with less discussion and interaction in offline teaching, the expected effect of blended learning can not be achieved. To embody the advantages of blended learning, teachers should start with instructional design, teaching resources and teaching evaluation to improve the effectiveness of blended learning in College English, so as to achieve the expected effect of blended teaching.

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