

# The Blended Teaching Design of College English Based on Theories of Flipped Classroom

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**Abstract.** Flipped classroom as the advanced way of blended teaching, has the characteristics of being online and offline and fits in with the meaning of blended teaching. The online activities are the necessary, and the offline is the extension of being online. The blended teaching reconstructed the traditional classroom teaching, making the study rise from the superficial level to the deep level. College English teaching guided by foreign language teaching theories to cultivate students' English language knowledge, applying ability, cross-cultural ability and learning strategy aims to train students' comprehensive ability of English and use language effectively in life and study to meet the needs of social development and international communication. The construction of blended teaching design could help college students to study learn by themselves and improve their whole comprehensive ability to some degree, and it contributes the renewal of teaching concept and the enhancement of teaching effects.

## 1. Introduction of Related Concepts

Flipped classroom originated from 80-90s' America in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which stresses that most of the classroom time is given to students to explore and discuss, while the teacher plays the role of interpreting the basic knowledge, answering questions, and guiding the class. Through the online video-watching about the basic knowledge before class, the superficial level of learning such as the memorizing and understanding process is achieved [1]. The blended teaching mixed the traditional teaching mode with the information teaching mode, and it breaks the boundary between the in-class and out-of-class and arrives at the combination of "on-line + off-line" teaching mode. This teaching mode dose not only introduce the on-line resources but also makes use of the resources to set up creative class teaching to help students get the resources what they need and satisfy their personal learning needs by breaking the limits between the time and space [2].

According to the famous education psychologist Robert Mills Gagne, who summarized the basic principle of teaching design into one sentence that different learning inner conditions should be created based on the different learning result types additionally the external learning conditions, two dimensions should be taken into consideration. One dimension is the learning result type, and the other one is the learning internal and external conditions.

## 2. Theory principles of blended teaching

The objective of college English teaching is to cultivate students' applying ability, to increase their cross-cultural communication awareness and ability, meanwhile develop students' autonomous learning ability to improve their comprehensive cultural ability, which help them use English effectively in study, life, society and future job to meet the needs of personal development. In a word, the purpose of college English teaching is to let students use English and their applying ability as the focus. While the principles underlying the blended teaching mode would contribute to the teaching and learning of college English, it can be seen in the following aspects.

## **2.1 The cognitive theory**

Three representative theorists of cognitive theory are Bruner, J., Ausubel, and Robert Mills Gagne. In Bruner's opinion, learning is the process to form cognitive structure actively and basic structure of the subject is stressed. The acquisition of new knowledge is what Ausubel said the meaningful learning, which can be realized through the connection between the the new concept and learners' original cognitive structure. In his opinion, the only one factor to affect learning is what learners know before [3]. Gagne thinks that learning is restricted by the internal and external conditions. The external condition refers to the structure and format of the input stimulus, while the internal conditions are the skills, motivation, and learning abilities what the learners acquired before.

The teaching design of cognitive theory plays emphasis on the formation of knowledge structure in learners' brain, and the teaching materials are just means to help learners restructure and form a new cognitive structure. The teaching process is considered as the process for learners to explore and discover autonomously, while questions are used to cause the conflicts for learners to hypothesize and prove.

## **2.2 The constructive Learning Theory**

Constructivism is a theory of knowledge that argues the humans generate knowledge and meaning from an interaction between their ideas [4]. Piaget's theory of constructivist learning has had wide ranging impact on learning theories and teaching models in education. He suggested that through processes of accommodation and assimilation, individuals construct new knowledge from their experiences. When individuals assimilate new knowledge, they incorporate the new experience into an already existing framework without changing that framework. Constructivism as a theory of teaching reveals the cognitive structures in human's learning process. According to constructivist learning theory, learners acquire knowledge not from teachers but from their own cognitive system. Then they can construct their knowledge system by themselves with the aid of their social and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, constructivist learning theory holds the belief that students' cognitive learning process is an active process of constructing knowledge instead of a passive process of receiving knowledge from teachers. In the constructivist classroom, students learn in groups and cooperate with their classmates and teacher. The main goal of applying constructivist teaching model is that students need to know how to learn autonomously and to take responsibility for their own learning.

The teaching design of constructive theory firstly stresses the concept that "students as the center" and students are encouraged to learn autonomously and to be creative, and secondly the actual situation with social background is important. Thirdly "cooperative learning" plays a key role in constructing the meaning, and the learning environment is stressed. Learners will not only receive help and support but also be cooperative and supportive with each other. In the process of learning, varieties of information resources will be provided for learners to explore and study autonomously and cooperatively, including all kinds of teaching materials and teaching resources. The ultimate goal of learning is to complete the structure of meaning, but not the teaching goals [5].

## **3. Blended Teaching design of College English Teaching Based on the Flipped Classroom**

From the theoretical learning support and the teaching design underlying the theories, it can be seen that blended teaching has been proved effectively to help learners' study. Under these principles, this paper will analyze how the college English should be designed based on the flipped classroom. Flipped classroom is not only different from the traditional classroom teaching but also different from the traditional online education. It combines the advantages of the traditional classroom and the online education, and makes the physical classroom and the virtual classroom as one.

### **3.1 The On-line Teaching Design**

Before the traditional class learning starts, flipped classroom stresses the "on-line" learning which is the necessary part for blended teaching. The online teaching design includes two parts, namely, the

objectives of online teaching and the detachment of knowledge points, which can be realized by practice and videos. For college English teaching, the needs of language teaching and the needs of learners in the flipped classroom will be analyzed.

Brown once said that the teaching of language is based on the meaning and the connection between the input and communication [6]. So the principles of teaching design before the class should aim at preliminary understanding and mastery of basic knowledge to make students understand and input the language, providing the basis for the subsequent output. In this phase, the basic knowledge about the text, such as the memorization of key words, understanding of the main idea and the superficial teaching objectives would be realized. Considering the teaching objectives and teaching effects, teachers should be cautious about the amount of tasks and the difficulty, which should be proper and not too difficult. Otherwise, too difficult tasks would make students bored, tired and frightened about the contents that they will learn.

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, teachers should reduce the threat in teaching to create a positive environment for students. So the tasks before class should be students-centered and personalized. According to students' different level, different tasks will be arranged for students to choose. The goal of preliminary tasks is to let students know clearly about the key points in the classroom teaching. If the cooperative method will be used in class, every student should know their study goals, plans, division of the tasks, and the expected results [7].

For example, the article *Teamwork at work* extracted from the book *English for Careers*, can be used for analysis. Here are three objectives to achieve. The first one is to realize the importance and benefits of cooperation and collaboration; the second one is to develop a good sense of belonging, and the ways to build teamwork skills; the third one is to think about the relationship between competition and cooperation. Before the class starts, the teacher assigns some preliminary tasks according to the teaching objectives, and students' study situation and need should be taken into consideration. The students are the non-English major three-year-college students, and this is the third semester for them to have some preparations for the job. Through learning this unit, students will know the importance of working in a group by preliminary tasks and in-class activities. The teacher lets students choose assignments about how to cooperate within a group according to their level and interests, besides memorizing the key words and understanding concerned concepts, such as teamwork and team player online. The words part, concerned concepts, and basic structure can be presented to students through videos and practice online.

### **3.2 The off-line teaching design**

This off-line teaching, or the face-to-face teaching in class is not separated from the online learning, but combined with the online teaching, including teaching contents, managing the course resources, assign homework, and testing. The design of teaching includes two main parts, the teaching objectives and the teaching contents, which are supported by concerned teaching theories, such as schema theory and interactive theories. The teaching contents are interactive with the design of teaching activities and both the the teaching objectives and the teaching contents will affect the whole assessment process.

All the categories of schema theories include the language schema, the format schema and the content schema. The language schema refers to the vocabulary and grammar which are the basis for reading; the format schema refers to the organization of the passage and the genre which contributes to understanding the writer's thought and writing purpose; the content schema refers to the background knowledge which helps learners to deepen the understanding of the article. These three schemas are interactive with each other to affect on the reading effects [8]. In teaching, the teacher may assign each part of three schemas for students to preview online. For example, the new words and phrases can be presented in PPT and practiced online, and the background information and general structure can be presented online too.

The schema theory thinks that people learn new things by linking the new information with the old information in brain, which is called comprehension. Whether people understand the new things or not greatly depends on the schema existing in brain. If the original schema fits in with the new

information greatly, it will contribute the understanding and assimilation of the new information. If people do not have the schema to fit with the new information or the new information can not activate the schema in brain, it is hard for people to understand the new things. Ellis (2003) thinks that tasks are the language practice activities centered in meaning [9]. Xia Jimei thinks that tasks are the objective targeted communication activity or communication process. Tasks means doing things based on meaning communication. In the process of doing things or communication, learners are positive or active to learn and the task-based study is the process of learning by doing. So the task of language teaching is not the interpretation of words, phrases, sentences and grammar within context, but the communication activity to combine vocabularies, grammar and functions based on specific teaching objectives.

In the lead-in part, a language learning environment based on tasks is constructed for students to arouse their interests in the topic. As students have previewed concerned words, phrases, and have a general idea about the passage, and the following activities should be centered on their questions. The core of the class lies in problem-solving, including students' understanding of the passage and related background information. The teacher may use kinds of methods, such as group discussion and role play to achieve the teaching objectives.

#### **4. Assessment**

According to the core five elements of blended teaching raised by Jared M. Carman [10], namely the physical class, the real and meaningful study materials, the controllable online study, the cooperation, and assessment. The assessment is an important in any part of the whole blended teaching design. Even before the teaching activity takes place, the method and criteria of the assessment should be set up in order to monitor the teaching effects and the check whether the teaching objectives are achieved or not. In a word, the assessment is to control the teaching activities at a macro-level. The assessment of teaching design includes the following parts:

1. All the results in each sub-activity and phase should be set up, including the record of the learning process, or the report. For example, how much time do students spend online, and their group report in class.

2. The assessment method and regulations should be stipulated, including the the evaluation subject, evaluation object, and the references. The evaluation subjects may be the teacher, learners, study partner, or others; the evaluation objects include the behavior in the learning process, the results of learning, and the achievement of goals, and each item should be specific; the reference of assessment can be standards set before or relative reference.

3. The feedback mechanism to assess should be regulated, namely specifying the reaction to the assessment, including the feedback means, routes, and how to correct the teaching behavior according to the evaluation results.

The traditional assessment of teaching is mainly summative assessment based on the scores at the test, which lack the efficient supervision of students' learning process and learning attitudes. The assessment of blended teaching based on flipped classroom will be more scientific and reasonable, which makes a multiple evaluation comes into being as it combines summative evaluation, formative evaluation and diagnostic evaluation. A multiple evaluation takes many aspects into consideration, such as the times students watch PPT online, how much time they spent online before class starts, students' performance in class, and students' after-class performance. For example student A, who will be evaluated as the follows: student A watches concerned video materials for five times and the total time is 52 minutes, and test score is 90 (the total score is 100 scores) online; how many times he answered questions and be positively and creatively to anticipate class activities; how long he spent reviewing the concerned contents. Not only the student's all performance will be recorded, and their evaluation or reactions to each part in the whole process will be assessed too.

## 5. Conclusion and Suggestions

The blended teaching based on flipped classroom stresses the teacher's role as a guide and students are dominate in the whole learning process, which fits in with the popular learning theories, such as the humanistic theory and constructive learning theory. The development of technology promotes the innovation of teaching mode and changes of teaching method, which makes the class more actively participate in activities. The flipped classroom changes the opposition between the teacher and the students, and students' interests and initiative are inspired as more interesting activities can be completed online, while the teacher can monitor and assess effectively what and how students learn online and off-line. Every course is supposed to take its own teaching objectives when using the blended teaching method online and off-line.

In terms of teaching design, it includes many aspects, including students' study need, the learning contents, learning objectives, analysis of learners, the formulation of teaching strategies, and the assessment of the teaching design. Additionally, the use of multimedia is taken into consideration. The flipped classroom achieves its superficial objectives through students' online learning by remembering words, phrases and watching concerned PPT to have a general idea of the passage. In the physical class, the face-to-face cooperative leaning will be used to achieve the middle teaching objectives such as to apply, to analyze, to evaluate by consolidating the knowledge online. If the face-to-face time is not enough, the comprehensive application tasks or creative application tasks may be designed for students to output and apply the knowledge and achieve the advanced teaching objectives, such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

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