

Online and Offline, Learning All the Time ——The Analysis on the Practicability of Blended Teaching Mode of College English Based on iSmart Platform

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ABSTRACT

The traditional college English teaching mode cannot meet the needs of College English Teaching in the new era. The Online and Offline Blended Teaching Golden Mode, one of the key construction modes by the Ministry of Education, is particularly suitable for College English teaching. Combined with the iSmart platform of Higher Education Press, this paper analyzes the online and offline blended teaching mode of College English Teaching in Application-oriented Undergraduate Colleges, and constructs the blended teaching mode from four parts: full preparation from teacher and self-study from students before class; active interaction and efficient classroom teaching; consolidated quizzes and timely feedback after class; managing and supervision and complete evaluation of learning process, so as to promote college English teaching efficiency.

Keywords: *Golden mode, iSmart platform, Blended teaching mode, College English teaching reform.*

1. INTRODUCTION

With the coming of information era and the development of Big Data, Cloud Computing, and Artificial Intelligence, The way of living, the way of thinking and the way of learning of human beings have also undergone radical changes. In line with the development of the times, the Ministry of Education held successive meetings in 2018, demanding of continuously promotion of the deep integration of information technology and education, so as to built a networked and digital education system. It particularly emphasizes the construction of high quality undergraduate education, so as to improve the quality of undergraduate teaching to eliminate "frivolous courses" and forge golden course. The Ministry of education calls for the construction of five types of "golden course" modes, among which online and offline blended Teaching Mode is particularly suitable for college English teaching.

2. COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHING REFORM

Looking back on the college English teaching in China in the past decades, the achievements have been fully affirmed. The quality of College English teaching has been greatly promoted. The listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities have been greatly improved. Over the past two decades, college students' English level has indeed reached a new level on the whole.¹ On the other hand,

there are the phenomena of mute English, dumb English, Chinglish and broken English among our students widely.

According to The Guidelines on College English Teaching, the College English guidance document released by the Ministry of Education in 2017, The objective of College English is to develop students' ability to use English in a well-round way, enhance their cross-cultural communication awareness and ability, and at the same time, cultivate their ability to study independently, and improve their general cultural awareness. Students should enable to use English effectively in their study, life, social interaction and future work so as to meet the needs and requirements of national, social, school and personal development.² Whether College English is regarded as an essential college curriculum to enhance the vision of college students and cultivate global awareness, or as a time-consuming and inefficient "chicken ribs" course, it is an indisputable fact that the College English teaching efficiency needs to be improved.

The English level of students in college is uneven, and their motivation and concentration are insufficient and inadequate at present in our college. Although students are willing to accept internet learning, they are still lack of initiative and self-discipline. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the ability, attitude, as well as the existing knowledge reserve of students; in addition, the teaching materials should also be taken into consideration. It is important to make adjustment and integration of the teaching materials to set the reasonable teaching objectives and content of courses.

Taking all the above into consideration, the iSmart platform and iSmart app developed by higher education press has been adopted to design and construct the online and offline blended Teaching Mode in English teaching in the application-oriented College among the wide ranges of Internet teaching platforms and mobile apps, so as to integrate the advantages of traditional classroom teaching (c-learning) and e-learning, and explore new way for College English Teaching reform.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE TEACHING REFORM

According to the learning theory of constructivism, students' learning is a process of actively constructing knowledge based on one's own knowledge and experiences. So learners are considered to be most important and active organism in the process. Ralph W. Tyler, known as the father of modern curriculum theory, stressed that effective instruction should be organized with students' learning as the center.³ Since the theory was put forward, it has triggered many arguments and educational reforms in the educational and academic circles. Nowadays, the student-centered concept has taken hold.

In the new era, due to the popularity of smart phones and the development of 4G or even 5G networks in the future, rich network resources and network functions make it possible for students to learn independently and autonomously. However, there also arouse some new problems, for example, overemphasizing students' autonomous learning, weakening the main leading role of teachers, ignoring the integrity of teaching process, etc. Especially considering the learning characteristics of Students in application-oriented College, the leading role of teachers cannot be ignored. Thus the high quality of classroom teaching should not only include the active participation and construction of Students, but also the guidance and instruction of the teachers.

It is in this context that blended learning is put forward again, and given a new connotation, which has attracted wide attention, attempt and discussion of people in the field. Blended learning adheres to the goal orientation mode. Under the guidance of autonomous learning theory and blended learning theory, it is a strategy that combines offline classroom teaching and online student's learning according to the conditions of learners and instructors. It effectively integrates face-to-face teaching and online learning, aiming to improve the efficiency of teaching and learning. It can not only give full play to the leading role of teachers in guiding, inspiring and monitoring the teaching process, but also give full play to the initiative, enthusiasm and creativity of students as cognitive subjects, so as to achieve the best learning effect.

Based on those theories, The Guidelines on College English Teaching by the Ministry of Education(2017) clearly points out that: College English Teaching should carry out the teaching principle of teachers as the leading

role and students as the main body, so as to realize the transformation of teaching activities from teaching to learning, and the transformation of teaching process from teaching purpose to learning needs, so as to form a teaching new normal characterized by teachers' guidance and inspiration and students' active participation. Therefore, the college English teaching should center on the students' subjectivity with the consideration of individual differences, psychological characteristics, learning methods and learning rules of students, etc., to achieve the best teaching efficiency.

4. ISMART PLATFORM BY THE HIGHER EDUCATION PRESS

The cultivation of English ability needs a lot of practice for a long time, but because of the influence of language environment and limited classroom time, there are a few opportunities for students to take the initiative to use it in communication and in real life. So in addition to the classroom teaching in which teacher should lead students to acquire effective listening and speaking learning strategies, as well as reading, writing and translating skills, teachers also need to use modern approaches, such as network technology, to provide various ways and opportunities for students to practice English.

With the advent of the "Internet plus" era, the network platforms and resources can make up for the limitations of classroom teaching in many aspects. Especially with the development and popularization of mobile information technology, smart phones have brought extensive and far-reaching influence to English learning. Smart phones have now become the most widely used mobile terminal devices for students. As long as students open mobile app and mobile network, they can obtain a large number of resources. "Learning English all the time, Learning English everywhere" has become possible.

The iSmart platform is a smart foreign language learning platform developed by the higher education press, which integrates offline classroom teaching and online autonomous learning to support foreign language teaching. It succeeds in building a foreign language environment of "teaching + Learning + examination", and providing learning for users by its vast data resource and abundant teaching resources so to realize the individualization and intelligence of foreign language education and learning. Its functions especially tailored to the needs of English teaching compared to other platforms. With the support of Cloud question bank, It can conduct autonomous training of every English skills separately, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation skills, as well as mixed and integrated training of English skills. Moreover, It can be used for multi-terminal interactive learning ,synchronously and asynchronously, to meet the requirements of mobile and fragmented flipped classroom. Students can use both the computer and the mobile terminals to learn autonomously micro lessons, MOOCs ,

etc. and finish exercises independently at everywhere and at any given time.

Through the integration of Online Autonomous Learning and offline classroom teaching, the platform can maximize the role of teacher as a guider, organizer, facilitator and supervisor, and stimulate students' initiative, enthusiasm and creativity.

5. THE ONLINE AND OFFLINE BLENDED TEACHING MODE

The online and offline blended Teaching Mode is the integration of student's online autonomous Learning and offline classroom teaching, Emphasizing teachers' leading role and student-oriented teaching design. The combination of Outcome-Based teaching Approach, Task-Based teaching Approach, Interactive teaching Approach, etc., helps to construct the high quality English teaching. According to the practices and experiences of English teaching in my college, the Mode included four teaching parts, that is, pre-class stage, in-class stage and post-class stage and class-managing.

4.1 The Pre-class Stage

The pre-class stage is the preparation part of the whole teaching process. In order to achieve the teaching objectives, the pre-class stage mainly includes two parts: the teacher's preparation of learning resources and activities on the iSmart platform; the student's Autonomous Learning activities on the platform. First, teacher must clearly know the teaching objectives, the language knowledge points, vocabulary, sentence patterns and cultural knowledge, etc., of the unit. Students have to master and have a deep understand about them after learning. Teacher also need to determine teaching procedures and contents, design specific teaching steps and methods according to those objectives. Finally, all the content and materials of the unit have to upload on iSmart platform before class. With the multiple functions of platform, it is easy for teacher to make homemade courseware, grading tests, self compiled test questions, self built item bank and auto-generating test, as well as to upload the necessary learning resources to the platform, such as some short videos clips, Micro-lectures, as well as the small videos of language knowledge explanation made by the teacher.

On the other hand, students should open the iSmart app on their mobile and network to learn those resources everywhere and every time. The platform can also meet the students' individual learning goals. Teachers can provide teaching resources at different levels on the platform. Students can choose materials according to their own English level. That is to say, students can decide the length of the time to completely understand and master the courseware materials given by teachers. Wherever there is a problem, student can put forward their question

conveniently on the platform immediately, which will be seen by both teacher and other students. The interactive discussions between students and between students and teacher can greatly promote the ability of independent learning, cultivate their ability to solve problems. By this way, it can also form good team work spirit and develop good interpersonal relationship.

The rich and high quality learning resources provided by teachers and independent mastering and fully grasping the content to be learned before class by the students are the important prerequisites for the implementation of blended English Teaching.

4.2 In-class Stage

After the teaching materials are transferred to the students before class, high-quality teaching and learning activities are needed in the classroom, so that the students can apply what they have learned in the classroom. Teaching should change the single teacher-centered mode. It is necessary to form a classroom teaching model in which teachers design, guide and stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning, and students take the initiative to discuss, think and learn independently. Through various kinds of activities, such as brainstorming, scenario simulation and role playing, etc., teacher and students, students and students can form active and positive interactions. The situations of "no questions, no answers", "one question for the student, one answer from the student" "one question for students, no answer from the student" should be changed. The teacher is no longer just the teacher of the course, but more like the guide and promoter of the learning process; the student changes from the passive receiver to the main body of the learning activity; the classroom is the place for teachers and students to answer questions, solve doubts, discuss problems and exchange ideas.

Moreover, in the past, when students were assigned to preview the text, the teacher lacked an effective test to check the result of students learning in pre-class stage because of the limited classroom time. The check is always very random, scattered and incomplete. With the support of the platform, The teacher can start with a quiz among the whole class in a few minutes to test what students have learned in the pre-class stage. Each student need to finish these well-designed questions set by teacher in a few minutes. Through various forms, such as Fill in the blanks, select the words, copy the sentences, and play the game tasks, (you say I guess, fill in the word games, spelling competitions), etc., teacher can have a comprehensive understanding about the students pre-class learning. Such as, before starting a new unit, the students in my class are always required to study all the new words independently before class. Then, there will be a five-minute, twenty-word quiz for them to finish at the beginning of the class. The result are presented and released immediately, which can stimulate students' interest and activate the classroom atmosphere.

Through students' autonomous learning online, they will inevitably have difficulties and questions about the

materials of the unit. Teachers need to timely track the feedback of students' online self-study and collect students' doubts. So, during the In-class stage, teacher should combine the main language knowledge points, vocabulary, sentence patterns, etc. to those difficulties and doubts together and explain them to the students thoroughly and completely. After those questions solved, teacher can divide the students into groups to complete the learning project. The content of cooperative project learning can be about vocabulary and understanding of the text, background knowledge of the text, social investigation, etc. In the next class, students are organized to report in groups and show and explain the learning results of each group project. Only in this way can we give full play to the initiative of the students and the role of the classroom, so as to achieve the purpose of putting learning into practice. Classroom activities have changed from one-way single teaching by teachers to two-way, high-involved interactive communication between teachers and students, creating a diversified interactive communication mechanism between teachers and students, students and students, forming a multi-dimensional communication mechanism and increasing the mental communication and emotional communication between teachers and students. It is helpful for teachers to help students improve the ability of knowledge internalization, effectively cultivate students' creative thinking, divergent thinking, logical thinking and independent inquiry ability, communication ability, problem-solving ability and collaborative cooperation ability. This high-involved and efficient classroom teaching is an important guarantee to achieve the expected goal of blended teaching.

4.3 Post-class Stage

Students need to finish the various kinds of tests and high-demanding exercises to strengthen and consolidate what they have learned in the classroom in the Post-class stage. Based on the progress of students' learning and the actual level, teachers can flexibly and autonomously design various online quizzes on the platform, including comprehensive testing and training in vocabulary, grammar, key and difficult sentence patterns, text understanding, etc. Students can listen, speak, read and write independently on platform, the results and mistakes can be obtained immediately at the end of the tests and it is convenient for students to study independently and test the learning effect by themselves. In addition, one of the features of iSmart is that it can directly turn all the previous exercises into tests. This enables the test to highly integrate the content learned, further strengthening the knowledge points of students' learning, and effectively promoting the internalization of students' knowledge. In addition, there are a lot of English test questions in the test library, including level of CET4 and level CET6, etc., from which teachers can select the test content that conforms to the students' learning level, require the students to submit the answers within the specified time, and replace the manual scoring by the system scoring, so

as to effectively reduce the workload of teachers. With its high efficiency, various forms and high-frequency, iSmart's test truly realizes timely feedback and time-saving.

At the same time, the iSmart platform is also integrated with the composition correction network. After students complete their compositions, they submit them on the iSmart platform, and the platform will automatically judge scores and correct grammatical errors one by one. Teachers can also manually correct the composition, sort out and record the problems, and then present them in the "students ask me" interface. According to the teacher's explanations and suggestions, the students grade each other compositions in the group, and express their opinions and comments. The teacher can write the general comment and instruct the students to revise it again.

iSmart also has a powerful voice evaluation function, which can effectively practice and test students' oral English. In the oral practice, teachers can set up the following reading mode, consolidation mode and promotion mode to help students to carry out progressive learning, and judge whether the students' following pronunciation is standard by the platform, then grade the students' oral level, and mark the students' wrong words in the following reading process, so that students can correct and practice according to their evaluation results. Students also can collect English materials through self-study or student cooperation, and then upload their learning results to the platform to show students' oral practice achievement. Other students can watch, comment and praise anytime and anywhere, while teachers can provide online guidance according to students' learning progress, so that students can understand their pronunciation in time. In this way, we can save the time that teachers need to correct students' pronunciation one by one.

The timely test and high-demanding exercises after class are important guarantee to achieve the expected goal of blended teaching.

4.4 Management and Supervision of Learning Process

It is a long process to master a language. The acquisition of English ability needs a lot of language practice and the long-term and lasting efforts of educators and learners. However, there are many disadvantages in the current college English teaching, such as the large scale of English classes, the small allocation of English class hours, long intervals between course progress and so on. Students can't carry out sufficient English learning and practice in the limited classroom, and teachers can't give consideration to the different situations of each student. So some students feel that it makes no difference whether or not they attend the English class; no difference whether or not they listen to the English class; no difference whether or not they pass the English exam; In addition, the Application-oriented College students have low learning motivation and no interest in learning, so the limited learning time of English classroom is far away to acquire the necessary English ability for most students. We need to expand the depth and breadth of students' learning, as well as the study length and space. English learning should not be limited to textbooks and classrooms, but always run through the

whole University for four years; furthermore, it is a lifelong learning process.

The management and supervision of Learning process based on the iSmart platform can be divided into two parts, one is the learning process monitoring and another is the learning process management. The listening, speaking, reading and writing activities on iSmart and learning situation will be fed back to teacher immediately, and their learning progress will also be recorded. Teacher can also observe the learning effect of students and error summary first-hand. Teachers can directly see students' video viewing rate, online interactive communication, and the results of the quiz, interview video uploaded by students, students vote rate and other specific results. These data can also be seen by students on the platform terminal. Once students fail to hand in their homework, or a learning point is not well mastered, teachers can see it at the first time, urge students to finish their homework or relearn, so as to motivate students to learn English better. Moreover, it can reduce teachers' workload to a certain extent, and improve teaching efficiency.

In the aspect of teaching evaluation, the traditional teaching evaluation standard cannot evaluate students' learning effect comprehensively and objectively. There are many loopholes in the traditional teaching evaluation link, such as the lack of effective supervision, inspection and tracking of the completion of homework, and the evaluation of performance cannot reflect students' comprehensive ability. Information technology provides strong technical support to solve the problem that traditional teaching evaluation is not comprehensive and objective. The learning traces of online students are recorded and analyzed in the way of data, so that teachers can make scientific, reasonable and effective analysis of students' learning tracks and performance, and adjust teaching design constantly to meet students' learning needs. The number and duration of students watching the course video, the scores and accuracy of exercises and assignments, the number and quality of participation in forum communication, etc., liberate teachers from the heavy work of marking assignments, data collection, sorting, analysis, etc., and at the same time enable teachers to fully understand each student's learning progress. In a word, all the learning activities of students on the Internet are traceable and recordable, which not only provides a complete record for students' self-study and self-examination, but also greatly facilitates teachers' process evaluation and formative evaluation of students.

On the other hand, Teacher can easily control learning progress, learning duration by opening or closing the content of the text online. The platform can provide multiple functions to manager the learning process. Students' rate of attendance can be easily obtain through the voting function, which teacher can set various code words to stimulate student's interest and provide reliable data for evaluation. By using the questionnaire function of the platform, the participation of the whole staff is realized, which greatly saves the time of asking questions one by one in class. In addition, free speech, group discussion and other interactive activities can effectively

improve the pertinence and authenticity of the discussion by the functions of Question-and answer and Mini-project in the platform.

Learning process management can help students plan their study time and schedule reasonably, and guide, manage and supervise students' learning in all aspects, online and offline, thus to maximize their study effect. Good learning process management is a necessary means to achieve the expected goal of blended teaching.

5. CONCLUSION

It is a correct and forward-looking teaching idea to integrate modern information technology with college English curriculum.⁵With the help of network technology,blended learning constructs an ideal mode for College English teaching,that is, from the traditional mode of "classroom teaching and students'listening + homework completion" to "independent learning before class + classroom collaborative exploration + test feedback after-class + supervision and evaluation of the learning process". It realizes the goal of resource sharing, cooperative learning and multiple interaction, and the combination of network autonomous learning and classroom teaching.The new model makes up for the shortcomings of the traditional classroom, helps college students to flexibly arrange the pace, content, progress, time and place of learning, and cultivates the ability of inquiry learning and in-depth learning. The blended mode arouses the enthusiasm, initiative, the desire for knowledge and innovation ability of the students, and improves the consciousness and ability of autonomous learning. Students' subject consciousness has been better developed, and personalized learning has been realized.

However, some problems should be paid attention to in blended learning. For example, the guiding role of teachers cannot be replaced. Although teachers are not the only way to impart knowledge, they are still indispensable organizers, guides, supervisors and collaborators in the learning process of students. The overall teaching arrangement, plan and organization of teachers play an important role in the effective learning of students. Otherwise, students only follow blindly and learn inefficiently. In addition, for students with different English levels, teachers should also make different learning plans and contents with the help of the platform, and conduct real-time monitoring and evaluation, so as to prevent students from generating polarization and burnout.⁶Such as,the students with good foundation are actively joining in the blended classroom, and their learning initiative has been greatly exerted, while the students with poor foundation or introverted personality still play more roles as listeners. Therefore, how to strengthen the classroom management and make the tracking of learning results more detailed is the focus of our future work.

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