

Integrating Value Cultivation into College English Under the Background of Blended Teaching Taking *New Dimension College English* as an Example

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ABSTRACT

Currently, many developed countries are working on building online teaching platforms, developing online teaching software and establishing education resource databases. Conducting blended teaching and learning turns out to be a general world trend and has been a new normal for China's higher education. Meanwhile, according to the proposal of China's Ministry of Education, value cultivation should be effectively integrated into College English teaching. Therefore, Unit 1 Enjoy Your Beautiful Life of *New Dimension College English 4* is taken as an example to design teaching cases, demonstrating blended teaching of College English and integrating value cultivation into teaching activities in a subtle way.

Keywords: *College English, Blended teaching, Value cultivation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Blended teaching mode is a complementary and balanced pattern, taking full advantages of both online and offline education. Online education is an interactive education method using modern information technologies such as the Internet, multimedia, big data and artificial intelligence. The Higher Education Department of China's Ministry of Education mentioned in the work points of 2020 that "online golden courses" should be built, accelerating the sharing of high-quality course resources and promoting the deep integration of information technology and education.^[1]

Online teaching was and has been the main way of teaching during the outbreaks of COVID-19 in China and other developed countries around the world. In the post-epidemic era, it is still of great significance to innovate online and offline teaching mode and enhance teaching quality simultaneously. At present, implementing blended teaching has gradually become the general trend for China's higher education. Under the background of the extensive integration and innovative application of information technology and education, the realization of "Internet + Higher Education" remains an important development direction of China's education.

As a compulsory course in general education, College English has the characteristics of broad coverage, large span and long class time. During the learning process, students have the most extensive exchange and collision with western politics, religions, cultures and thoughts, making College English one of the courses that most vulnerable to the influence of foreign thoughts and cultures. Under this circumstance, the *College English Teaching Guide* issued by China's Ministry of Education puts forward that value cultivation should be effectively integrated into College English teaching.^[2] Therefore, how to seek the balance between learning foreign languages and cultures and maintain traditional native cultures and core social values becomes a challenge.

Through a series of practical teaching cases, this study aims to explore an innovative blended teaching mode that combines online and offline activities, and effectively integrate values cultivation and moral education in the teaching process. Taking advantage of the unique discipline superiority of College English, this study intends to probe into the humanistic spirit and cultural deposits behind the course itself and combine them with teaching activities, teaching contents, teaching difficulties and teaching methods, so as to realize the unity of comprehensive teaching and all-round education.

2. TEACHING OBJECTIVES OF COLLEGE ENGLISH

College English is a university-wide compulsory course in China. In every aspect of teaching activities, various teaching methods are used to develop students' language application skills, enhance their independent learning ability and improve their comprehensive cultural literacy. College English is arranged in the first, second, third and fourth semesters. Through four semesters of teaching, students are trained in speaking, reading, listening, writing and translating skills so that they can communicate basic information in English. This course mainly helps students to lay a solid language foundation, master good language learning methods and improve cross-cultural communication ability, in order to adapt to the needs of social development and economic construction.

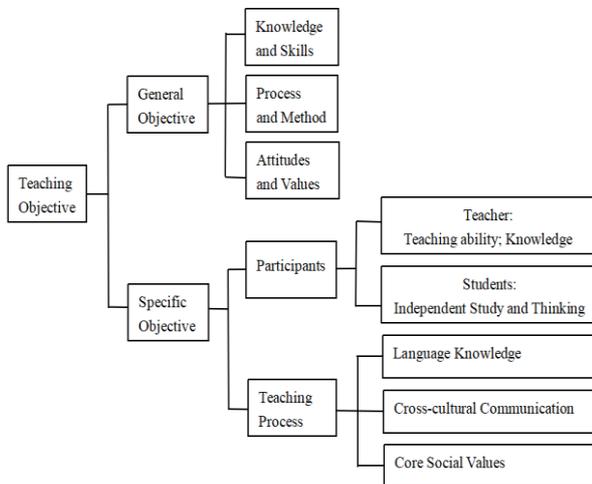


Figure 1. Teaching objectives

Teaching objective is the guiding ideology of teaching design.^[3] As is shown in Figure 1, general teaching objectives include three dimensions, namely knowledge and skills, process and method, emotional attitudes and values. In the specific blended teaching practice, as the participants of teaching activities, teachers should constantly improve their teaching ability and knowledge system; students are expected to strengthen their independent study and enhance their independent thinking ability. In the process of teaching, students are supposed to master basic language knowledge, improve cross-cultural communication skills and shape core social values.

This set of teaching design adheres to the principle of “seeking truth from facts”. In full consideration of the language level of the students and their ability to accept new knowledge, the teaching design selects the specific teaching materials and scientifically expands knowledge and skills beyond the textbook. Language knowledge, skill improvement, cultural integration and value cultivation are closely integrated. Students' independent

learning and teachers' directive teaching are conducted in parallel. Online and offline activities complement each other, thus forming a good teaching and learning cycle.

3. BLENDED TEACHING DESIGN IN PRACTICE

Text A “Three Days to See” in Unit 1 Enjoy Your Beautiful Life of *New Dimension College English 4* is selected as a case to present blended teaching in practice.

3.1. Independent Study before the Lesson (Online)

Assign pre-class tasks about Text A “Three Days to See” through WeChat group. Every class has a WeChat group for academic exchange and learning guidance. Under normal conditions, the tasks should be finished online before the lesson.

Task 1. Preview the new words and expressions in text A.

Task 2. Think about the following questions and have a discussion:

- (1) Do you know anything about Helen Keller?
- (2) Do you have some wishes which you know would never come true?
- (3) What would you do if you have three days to live?
- (4) Do you think people appreciate everything the world has given?
- (5) How should we enjoy our beautiful life?

The online arrangement of pre-class tasks aims to save offline teaching time and improve teaching efficiency, so that College English class is no longer focused on explaining vocabulary, grammar and other basic contents, but to improve students' practical skills as the main goal. In this teaching case, students were asked preview new words and phrases so that they can clear some basic obstacles for the smooth progress of teaching activities. At the same time, the students could get familiar with the content to learn through thinking and discussing relevant questions so as to ensure efficient classroom activities.

3.2. Main Teaching Activities in the Class (Offline)

3.2.1. Warm-up Activities

Table 1. Brainstorming for Helen Keller

Name	Helen Keller
Nationality	American
Gender	Female
Occupation	Writer; educator; social

	activist; philanthropist
Health Condition	Blind and deaf
Way of Communication	Sign; braille; writing

For warm-up activities, students were supposed have a brainstorming to collect information about Helen Keller and give an introduction in English. The teacher would make table 1 beforehand to help the students collect relevant information.

Introduction: Helen Keller (1880 — 1968) is an American female writer, educator, social activist and philanthropist. She lost the ability of hearing and seeing when she was 19 months old because of severe illness. Despite the fact that she was blind and deaf, she learned to communicate with others by sign language, braille and writing. She could speak five different languages and published 12 books. She founded Helen Keller International to reduce cases of blindness, as a result of which millions of people had their vision saved or restored. She was the first deaf and blind person to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree and became a powerful force for disabled rights, regarded as one of the ten great Americans of the 20th century by *Time*. Helen Keller dead at the age of 88, which means that she has lived in a world without light and sound for 87 years. However, she made great efforts to help those in need and made great achievements through her whole life. In China, She is famous for her essay “Three Days to See” which is the text to learn in Unit 1 Enjoy Your Beautiful Life of *New Dimension College English 4*.

3.2.2. Fast Reading Activities

Reading activities are the main tasks in the whole lesson. Students should do fast reading by using scanning strategy. Scanning is running the eyes over the text in order to locate specific details. They should read the given text following the rules: ① Read the question and search for key words or ideas associated with the question. ② Your eyes move quickly over the page, flitting around the text, back and forth, up and down. ③ Less reading and more searching. The brain hunts for special information—a word, a phrase or a number. The students were asked to remember the following questions and read text A for answers.

- (1) How is the miracle of Nature revealed to the author?
- (2) What does it mean by “the seeing see little”?
- (3) Can you find the sentences using metaphor?

After discussion section, the teacher guided the students to summarize the main idea of text A with about 100 words. The main idea of the text is as follows:

Helen Keller has often thought it would be a blessing if each human being were stricken blind and deaf for a few days at some time during his early adult life. A seeing friend finds nothing in particular after a

long walk in the woods. But she who cannot see find hundreds of things to interest her through mere touch. At times her heart cries out with longing to see all these things. If she was the president of a university, she should establish a compulsory course in “How to Use Your Eyes”. What would you do if you have three days to live? (107 words)

3.2.3. Intensive Reading Activities

Intensive reading means accurate reading for detailed understanding. Students should read the text again carefully to fully understand the whole meaning of it. For this time of reading, they were expected to understand each word, number or fact and improve other areas of English learning such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, writing techniques, and so on. In this teaching case, three writing techniques are mainly mentioned: parallel structures, comparison and contrast and exemplification.

Parallel structures are created when similar sentence structures are used one after another, usually more than two in sequence. They help to strengthen connections among ideas and hence to achieve coherence. In addition, they add both grace and rhythm to the sentences.^[4] In text A, parallel structures are widely used by the author Helen Keller. For example, the sentences “To me a lush carpet of pine needles or spongy grass is more welcome than the most luxurious Persian rug. To me the pageant of seasons is a thrilling and unending drama, the action of which streams through my finger tips.”^[5] in para 3 are parallel. The sentence structure is “To me A is B. To me C is D”, which has a strong expressive power.

In writing, people use comparison and contrast to explore a topic by examining similarities and/or differences between two things or concepts. Comparison emphasizes the similarities while contrast the differences. In practice, however, comparison and contrast often go hand in hand because people usually compare two things that are similar in certain aspects and different in others. In text A, comparison and contrast can be found in para 1-3 as listed in table 2 which is made by the teacher. As is shown in table 2, Helen Keller cannot see anything, but her friends do. After a long walk from the woods, her friends find nothing in particular, but Helen wonders how it was possible. Therefore, the author, Helen Keller, draws the conclusion: those who have eyes apparently see little, but she, who cannot see, finds hundreds of things through mere touch.

Table 2. Comparison and contrast in the text

Seeing Friends	Helen Keller
Can see	Cannot see
“Nothing in particular” in the woods	How was it possible?

Apparently see little by seeing	Find hundreds of things through mere touch
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Exemplification is also adopted in the given text. An example usually can be a single item, fact or incident serving to illustrate more general ideas or statements and make them clear, interesting, memorable, or convincing. Sometimes a single detailed example is enough, whereas on other occasions a list of examples may be necessary to illustrate a point. The author employs exemplification in para 3. “I who cannot see find hundreds of things to interest me through mere touch. I feel the delicate symmetry of a leaf. I pass my hands lovingly about the smooth skin of a silver birch, or the rough, shaggy bark of a pine. In the spring I touch the branches of trees hopefully in search of a bud, the first sign of awakening Nature after her winter’s sleep...”^[5] In this extract, the first sentence serves as the statement while the rest part is a list of examples to illustrate what Helen can find through mere touch.

4. VALUE CULTIVATION IN THE TEACHING PROCESS (ONLINE & OFFLINE)

It is universally acknowledged that value cultivation should be designed in humanities courses tactfully and efficiently. Teachers should try to explore ideological elements in teaching materials and expand relevant moral education according to the teaching content, so that students can absorb excellent cultures, thoughts and values and spread positive social energy as a result. Students are supposed to develop their emotions, attitudes, points of view and morality unconsciously in the over all process of teaching and learning. Only in this way, can education accomplish the unity of knowledge imparting, ability training and value guidance.

In this teaching case, the teacher recommended an inspirational English movie named *The Miracle Worker*, representing how little Helen Keller gets over the huge difficulties and manages to communicate with others under the guidance of her tutor Anne Sullivan. Watching English movie has been proved to be a very efficient way of English learning. The teacher and the students watched the movie together online in the classroom and then exchanged their feelings and comments about the movie. Most students were deeply moved by Helen’s story, holding that they would appreciate the present life and work harder in the future.

Besides, the teacher introduced a video clip of a documentary from the Propeller on the Internet. In the video, Helen Keller sits in a room, reading a book. She cannot see the room, nor the book she is reading. She sees nothing and hears nothing—she is deaf and blind. Polly Thomson has been with Helen for forty years. For nearly half of this, she has been Helen’s only companion, Helen’s eyes and ears upon the world. She

talks to Helen by a finger system in which each letter has a sign. In reaching out beyond the dark and silent night, Helen depends most on touch. Two other senses—taste and smell—remain for her. The scent of objects, places and people tells Helen much that normal people learn with eyes and ears. But her hand is her chief link with the outer world. With her hands, Helen reads Anne’s lips and answers with her voice. It is an unnatural voice and is her great sorrow. For all her years of effort Helen has never learned to speak clearly. That is not strange for since she was a baby she has not heard a word spoken nor seen lips working. With Polly’s help, Helen tells to the world with a muffled voice: “It is not blindness or darkness that bring me my darkest hours. It is the acute disappointment in not being able to speak normally. Longingly I fell how much more good I may have done if I had acquired normal speech. But out of this sorrowful experience, I understand more clearly all human striving thwarted ambitions and infinite capacity of hope.”^[6]

In addition, the teacher led the students to think about a Chinese celebrity, Zhang Haidi (1955—), who has the similar experience with Helen Keller. They were encouraged to describe Zhang’s remarkable deeds in English. Zhang Haidi is a contemporary Chinese writer, translator, teacher, doctor and social activist. She is also the current chairman of China Disabled Persons Federation (CDPF) and the member of Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), working in the ministerial rank. Zhang got high paraplegia at the age of 5 due to a spinal hemangioma and has been confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. Confronting cruel destiny, Zhang has never got depressed nor frustrated, fighting against the diseases with indomitable perseverance. Although she lost the opportunity to go to the campus, she worked hard and finished all the courses of primary school and middle school by herself. She taught herself college English, Japanese, German and other foreign languages, and obtained bachelor and master degree. When Zhang was 15, she moved to a village in Shandong province with her parents and became a teacher there. She went through four operations in more than ten years, but none of them made much difference. Latter, Zhang learned the techniques of traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture therapy and studied a large number of medical books all by herself, providing free treatment to more than 10,000 people. She herself is a disabled patient, but she became a doctor to heal the wounded and save the dying at the same time. In 1983, *China Youth Daily* praised Zhang Haidi as “the new Lei Feng of the 1980s” and “the contemporary Pavel Korchagin”. Even Deng Xiaoping called on young people to learn from her. From then on, Zhang began to create literary works, including novels and essays, and she has written and translated more than 1 million words till now. In 2013, Zhang was awarded an honorary doctorate degree

by the University of York for her outstanding achievements in literary creation and her contribution to promoting the cause of disabled people in China. Her most legendary experience is that she got a driving licence through her own efforts, becoming one of the first people with lower extremity disabilities in China to get a driving licence. Up to present, Zhang has still devoted to the development and construction of the social insurance and service system for the disabled. Zhang once said in an interview that everyone should try his best to be a useful person to the society. Zhang is so excellent that she makes tremendous achievements, enjoys a high status in the career and becomes one of the most influential model figures in China.

In the end, the students learned the life stories about Helen Keller and Zhang Haidi in groups, compared the similarities and contrasted the differences between these two great females, reaching an agreement that young people ought to learn the spirit of strong will, hardworking, self-discipline and perseverance from both Helen Keller and Zhang Haidi. Greatness is never a given—it must be earned. Never give up before any difficulties and challenges.

5. CONCLUSION

College English curriculum possesses the striking characteristics of internationalization, instrumentality, humanism, and speculation. Its teaching objectives are not only to train students to master the basic language skills, but also to promote students' humanistic quality, critical thinking capacity and intercultural communication ability. Teachers are supposed to carry out value guidance while transmitting the truth, imparting professional knowledge and resolving doubts for students, in order to combine explicit knowledge and implicit education as a unity properly.

Under the background of "Internet + Education", it is necessary to strengthen the deep integration of information technology and modern education, making full use of superior resources to keep pace with the times. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers should make all efforts to create advanced teaching ideas and innovative teaching methods to build a three-dimensional teaching carrier of "Classroom lessons + Internet resources + Platform courses" and efficiently design value cultivation into College English teaching to form a multiple teaching pattern of "Language learning + Cultural communication+ Critical thinking".

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